The Church of Our Lady of
the Sacred Heart of Church

Dedication

of the new

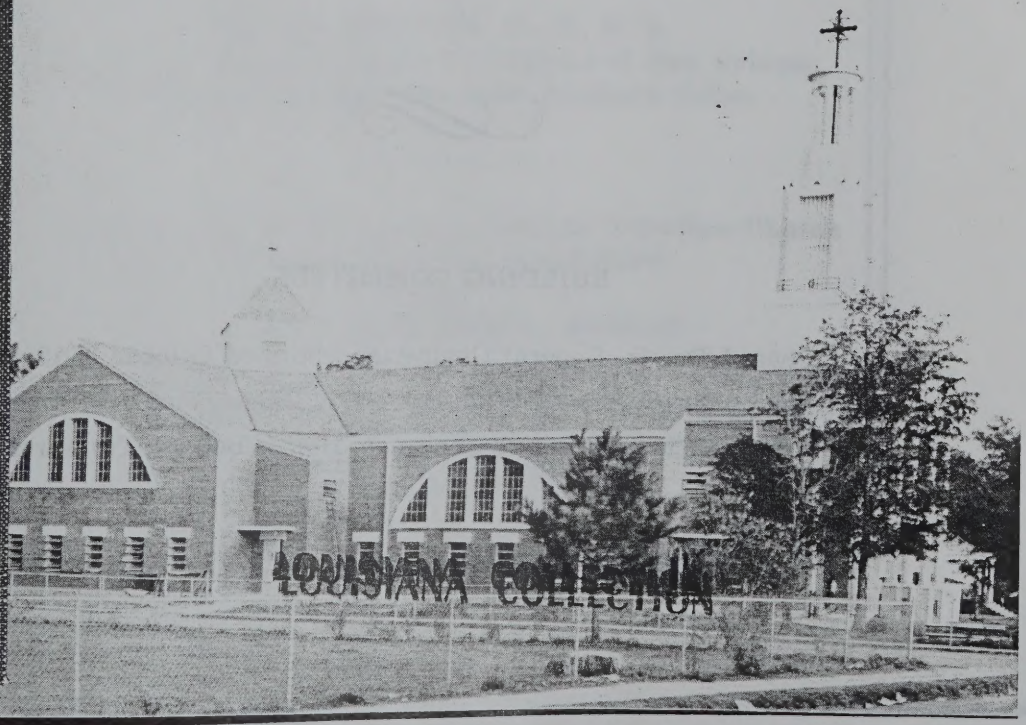
Church of Our Lady

of the

Sacred Heart

Church Point, Louisiana

November 25, 1954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1851 1954

THE CHURCH

Of

OUR LADY

Of The

SACRED HEART

Of

CHURCH POINT, LA.

A History of
The Chapel of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Plaquemine Brule and its Administration by the Jesuit Fathers — The Church of the Sacred Heart of Mary and Its Pastors — The Missions and Stations — The Pastoral Administration of Rt. Rev. Msgr. Clay A. Bienvenu — The Parochial School

By
ROGER BAUDIER, Sr., K. S. G.,
Official Chronicler of the Archdiocese of New Orleans
Officer of the Academy with Academic Palms.

An explanation of Architectural Features of the New Church of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart

By
OWEN J. SOUTHWELL, Architect

Compiled to Commemorate the Dedication of the New Church and the 25th Anniversary of the Ordination of the Fourth Pastor, Rt. Rev. Msgr. C. A. Bienvenu.
November 25, 1954

MARIAN YEAR

December 8

1953 – 1954

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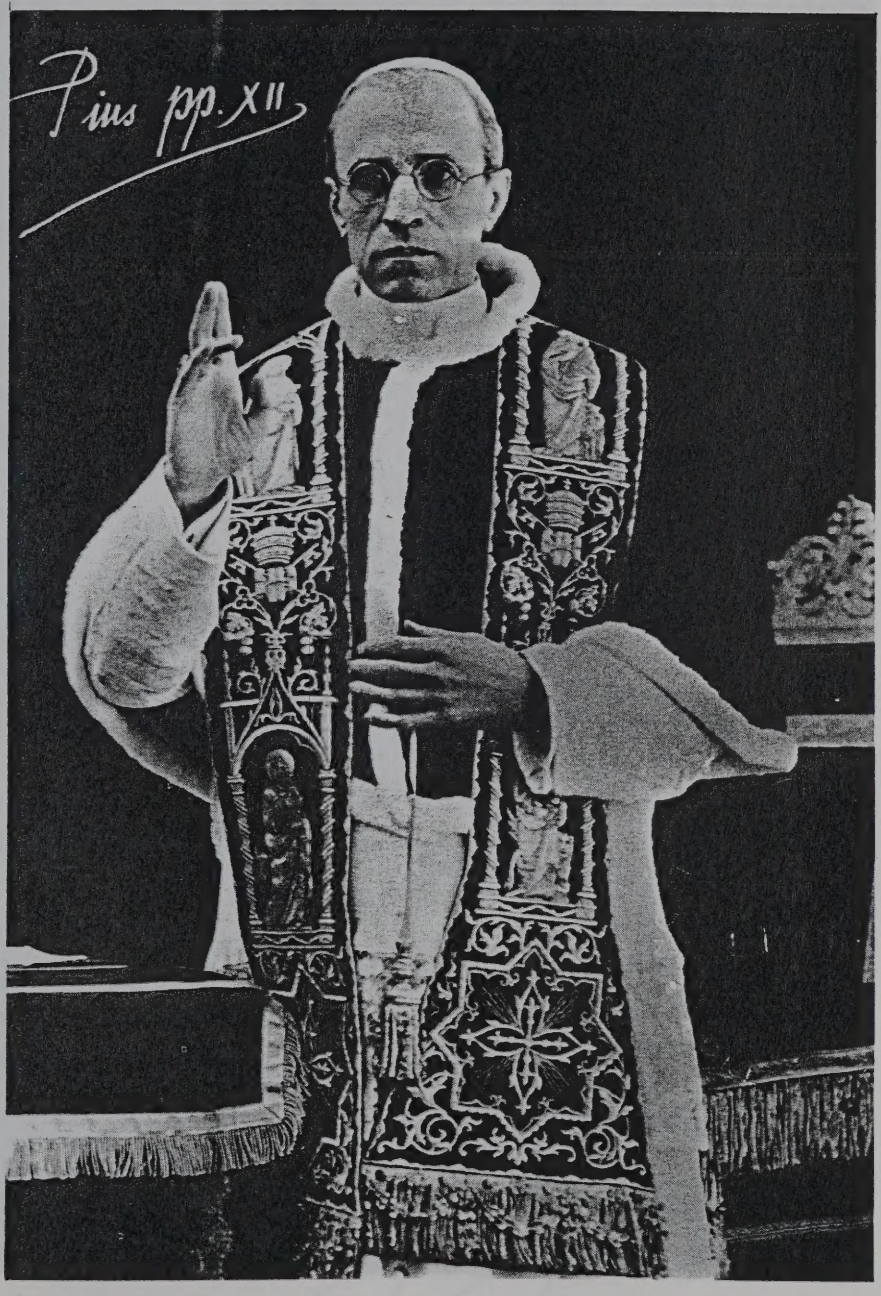

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FOREWORD

When your devoted pastor, the Rt. Rev. Msgr. Clay Bienvenu, discussed with me early last year the proposal for the building of a new parish church for Church Point, and I was informed of the spacious house of worship that the parish needed, my mind reverted to the parable of the mustard seed in the Gospel. This is the tiny seed that grew and sprang heavenward like a tree and the birds of the air came to nest in it.

The little chapel of Plaquemine Brule, started by the zealous Jesuit Fathers in 1851, and the congregation that it served, were both like that mustard seed, the tiniest of seeds, planted at that time in the vast mission field of Southwest Louisiana. Today, when we come to the time of dedication for the impressive new Church of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, we look with amazement and with gratitude at the tree into which the small seed of 103 years ago has grown.

However, we are mindful of those patient, energetic spiritual husbandmen who nurtured the young plant that came from this tiny seed, who watered it with their sweat and tears, who protected it with the warmth of their zeal, and who gave it the nourishment of their prayers and self-sacrifices and services, all of which brought upon it the life-giving sun-rays of God's grace. These were the remarkable pioneer priests to whom we are so indebted for the planting of the Faith and its preservation in the Attakapas country and in the old District of the Opelousas. We recollect with gratitude, as well as with admiration, the energetic Jesuit Fathers who labored in the Church field around Church Point for 32 years; with similar sentiments of admiration and gratitude we recall the services and sacrifices and achievements of such devoted pastors as good Father Eby, self-sacrificing Father Roger, and devoted Father Viel.

And last, but not least, we review with admiration, commendation and gratefulness, the outstanding labors of your present pastor, Monsignor Bienvenu, who has provided that spiritual and physical leadership, coupled with tireless labors, inspiring example and endless sacrifices, which have brought Church Point to the status of one of the largest and finest of the parishes in the Diocese of Lafayette. Most consoling of all as the result of these 18 years of labor is the vision of the blossoming of the Faith into a beautiful spirit of piety and active Catholicity, recommended for emulation. Let me not omit a word of appreciation for the contributions made to this achievement by the zealous assistants of the parish.

But well I know too, that if the tiny seed planted long ago developed into a great tree in God's field, there had to be good ground. That good soil in which the tiny seed was planted was the hearts and souls of the pioneer Acadian and French families and others whose descendants you are. In that good ground sprang forth the tree that has been bearing more and more good fruit a hundredfold. Among such fruit is the magnificent new church erected to God's honor and glory, undner the protecting mantle of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. To the Church, to your Bishop, to your devoted pastor who celebrates his silver sacerdotal jubilee, and to his assistants, you are a joy and a consolation. With such an inspiring congregation, I gladly join in jubilation, but especially in gratefulness to Almighty God for His blessings upon you and upon your beloved pastor who has served Him so zealously for 25 fruitful years.

I commend all of you together with your beloved pastor and his assistants to God's love through Our Lady of the Sacred Heart your parish patroness.

+ Jules B. Jammard

Bishop of Lafayette

MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR

"This is the day which the Lord hath made: let us be glad and rejoice therein" (Ps. cxvii,24)

The dedication of our new parish church makes us very conscious of the blessings that God has so generously bestowed upon you and upon me and upon our parish. Most appropriately that great event in our parish life and a notable event in my own priestly life are being observed on our country's day of thanksgiving to Almighty God.

For us of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Parish, we can truly say with the Psalmist: "This is the day which the Lord hath made: let us be glad and rejoice therein" (Ps. cxvii,24). For me personally, commemorating the 25th anniversary of my ordination to the Holy Priesthood, it is also a day which the Lord has made. This is a time then of rejoicing, but rejoicing in the Lord, as St. Paul exhorts us, and a time of thanksgiving, saying with King David: "I will give thanks to thee in a great church; I will praise thee in a strong people". (Ps. xxxiv,18).

For God's service, we have now a great church, but you my dear parishioners, a strong people, a self-sacrificing people, a generous people have made it possible. You toiled and you sacrificed and you gave generously from the blessings that God bestowed upon you. With a willing and co-operative spirit, you joined with your pastor and his assistants, and with your fellow parishioners to bring to reality the dreams of your own and the dreams of your forefathers. God looked down and was pleased, and He made this project to prosper. So at this season of Thanksgiving, we render humble thanks to a God of love and goodness.

If it is a day which the Lord has made, let us make it a day of thankfulness to Him. If we rejoice over the accomplishment of our task, let us rejoice in God Who made it possible. For 103 years now, our parish church has served this section, and our people have collaborated with the priests whom God placed over you. One century has gone — we are on our way into a second century. Thank Almighty God with me for His blessings of the past, and through the Immaculate Heart of Our Lady, let us implore Him for His guidance and protection for the year that rise one by one.

As for myself, I am profoundly grateful to God for conferring upon me His priesthood, humbly grateful for calling me to carry on the ministry of Christ among my fellowmen, deeply grateful for His light, guidance and graces in the past 25 years. My gratefulness includes especially God's holy will that cast my ministry for the past 18 years in your midst. For all of your co-operation and assistance given to me during those happy years with you, I express my sincerest thanks. Pray the Lord God to send His Holy Spirit down upon me that I may continue to go the way I should go in His Ministry of service to you.

These are the thoughts that inspire me as I place this message before you — a great day for us, but a day that God made possible; a day also of special remembrance for me, whom God chose for anointing for His service —truly, for all of this, it is a day that God has made, a day of rendering thanks, because God is good and His mercy endures forever.

RT. REV. MSGR. C. A. BIENVENU, Pastor.

HIS EXCELLENCY, THE MOST REVEREND
MAURICE SCHEXNAYDER, D. D.
AUXILIARY BISHOP OF LAFAYETTE

DEDICATION AND JUBILEE

ONE hundred and six years have elapsed since the Jesuit Fathers from Grand Coteau acquired land in the vast area originally known as "le District des Opelousas," a modest plot of ground in a new clearing that had been burned over at a point or bend of Bayou Plaquemine. Three years later, descendants of Acadian exiles, who had taken up lands along the bayous and the coulees, and on the extended prairies, worked side by side with Jesuit lay Brothers and workmen from St. Charles College of Grand Coteau, building a frame church — the first church in what is now Acadia civil parish. This was the Chapel of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Plaquemine Brule or Church Point of today.

Seventy-one years ago, the Jesuit Fathers relinquished the care of this chapel and its widely scattered congregation, and diocesan priests began to serve them. A second church was erected in 1885. At the present moment, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Parish witnesses the dedication of its third church — an impressive, substantial, adequate building, worthy of the place. Men of Plaquemine Brule built their first two churches with their own hands. This third church they have established with their own funds to serve their families, climaxing more than a century of Catholic ministrations in prairies of Acadia Parish.

For the past 71 years, since the diocesan clergy was placed in charge of the old Plaquemine Brule mission, only four priests have had the pastorate. Three of them bore the Christian name of Auguste and all from France — Rev. Auguste Eby, 1883-1902; Very Rev. Auguste Canon Roger, 1902-1928; and Very Rev. Auguste Canon Viel, 1929-1936. The fourth and present pastor, the energetic, tireless leader of a closely co-operating congregation is Rt. Rev. Msgr. Clay A. Bienvenu, who has brought Church Point into its own with remarkable spiritual progress and physical transformation of the ancient parish plant.

There is a spirit of jubilation in the venerable parish that started in a burned over clearing on Bayou Plaquemine. There are reasons. A new community center has been functioning. The ancient rectory has been remodeled and modernized. The convent has been repaired and the school progresses. The parish cemetery has been set in order and beautified. Parishioners at distant points in the parish have been given chapels of convenience and regular ministrations through the zeal and self-sacrifice of the pastor and devoted assistants. Then, climaxing all this, a new church, among the finest in the Diocese of Lafayette is being formally dedicated to the service of God. But all of this is as nothing to the devoted pastor in comparison to one outstanding fact — the year 1953 saw 92,000 persons at the Holy Table, receiving Our Lord in Holy Communion! This means spiritual progress.

Among families all over the prairies of Acadia Parish, there is jubilation, because their beloved pastor observes the silver jubilee, the 25th anniversary, of his ordination to the Holy Priesthood. Of

this quarter century in the priesthood and in the service of the Master, 18 years have been spent as shepherd of the flock in the Parish of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart of Church Point — 18 years of devotion, self-sacrifice, enthusiastic and unflagging labors on behalf of the souls entrusted to his priestly care. He can say truly in the words of the Savior Whom he has served so devotedly and conscientiously: "I know mine and mine know me." And because the flock knows its shepherd so well, they gather around him and rejoice.

In June of 1936, Canon Viel was appointed pastor of St. Peter's Church at Carencro, and the Most Reverend Bishop of Lafayette assigned the vacant parish of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart at Church Point to Rev. Clay A. Bienvenu, during the same month. This was a memorable event in the parish, because of the new era that it has ushered in for the church plant and the congregation.

Father Bienvenu (now Right Reverend Monsignor) is a native of St. Martinville, one of 12 children, born on October 7, 1900. After finishing parochial school, he decided to enter the priesthood, so enrolled at St. Joseph Preparatory Seminary at St. Benedict, La., in September, 1913. Upon completion of the preparatory course there, he was sent to Kenrick Seminary in St. Louis, Mo., where he made two years of philosophy and two years of theology. He then interrupted his studies in 1922, taking a position with the Chevrolet Motor Co., in St. Louis, but in 1923, he returned to Louisiana and took up teaching in public schools for four years — two years at Arnaudville, 1923-1925, one year at Church Point, 1925-1926, during the administration of Very Rev. Auguste Canon Roger, and one year at Lockport, 1926-1927.

In autumn of 1927, Monsignor Bienvenu decided that his vocation lay in the priestly life, and he went to New Orleans to enroll at Notre Dame Seminary. On May 25, 1929, at the age of 29, he was ordained to the holy priesthood. His Excellency, Bishop Jeanmard, assigned the new young priest to St. Michael's Church at Crowley, La., as assistant pastor. While at Crowley, Monsignor Bienvenu gave much attention to school work, teaching four subjects, also directing school athletics.

The young priest had a reserve commission as a U. S. Army Chaplain, and during the summer of 1930, he was assigned as chaplain of the Washington Artillery, outstanding Louisiana military unit, then as chaplain of the C. M. T. C. In 1933, during the depression, the Civilian Conservation Corps, popularly known as the CCC, was organized, and Father Bienvenu was appointed district chaplain for the state of Louisiana and Mississippi. He was in charge of all religious work and the training of new chaplains. In addition, he served as welfare and athletic director, and educational advisor. In October, 1934, he was elevated to the rank of Captain in the U. S. Army.

It was in 1936 that His Excellency, Bishop Jeanmard, called him back to the diocese and assigned him to Church Point. Rt. Rev. Msgr. A. Colliard, Dean of Opelousas, came down to Church Point

for formal transfer of the parish from Canon Viel to the new pastor, Father Bienvenu. Father Viel was waiting impatiently for his successor and importuned the Dean for the carrying out of the formalities. In a letter to the Bishop, who had also been contacted, Monsignor Colliard wittily stated that the outgoing pastor should at least give the incoming pastor an opportunity to obtain a few chairs so that they might all sit down to check over the inventory and make the transfer. The remark, however, was more than mere wit. The old system was in vogue, the pastor providing his own house furnishings, hence when he left, he took along his furniture. Embarrassment was the plight of the new pastor of undertaking housekeeping in a perfectly bare rectory.

Such was the welcome of Father Bienvenu, the new Church Point pastor on May 28, 1936 — a rectory and absolutely nothing in it. Welcoming his as his co-laborer in this corner of the prairie was Rev. E. Moreau, who took his meals at Mrs. Albert Breaux's Hotel. The new pastor looked over the situation and decided to board in the town until the "venerable" rectory could be brought up to some semblance of modern standards of convenience. Most parishioners readily agreed and lent a hand. Just 10 years before this, Father Bienvenu had visited this old rectory while he taught school at Church Point. At the time, he boarded at the home of Mr. and Mrs. E. L. Melancon. After sizing up the rectory, the new pastor turned his steps to his old boarding-house again and found hospitality there, while cleaning and remodeling was undertaken at the presbytery.

The pastor looked over the rest of the church property — the church, already showing the effects of half of a century and the great storm of 1909; the cemetery with its "forest" of weeds; the convent with a woebegone look, reflected by the surrounding church grounds. With a sense of depression, the new pastor asked himself: "Where to start?" But this was no time for discouragement. Father Bienvenu had made up his mind that with the help of the fine, willing people of the parish whom he met, he would bring the parish of Church Point into its own as it deserved. There was a large element, enthusiastic and devout, who backed him up.

Gradually the presbytery became a home. Father Bienvenu's aunt, Mrs. Clara Tertrou came with her furniture and took up the task of housekeeper. After much shifting around and "camping" as parts of the rectory were repaired and painted, and bathrooms were installed, the presbytery finally got a complete "face-lifting."

The resting place of the dead was tackled also. Many young high school boys were enlisted in the task, and within a month, the 80-year old cemetery was transformed. Next the rectory grounds, the church grounds and the property around the convent were tackled, and before long, the whole surroundings of the parish plant were taking on a "new look." It seemed like an endless task, but the new pastor had put his hand to the plow. He never looked back — he and the parish of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart had their eyes set on the future. A new era was opening up for old Plaquemine Brule's 80-year old parish.

However, it was not merely the physical plant that gave concern, but especially the spiritual status of his flock. There were two Masses on Sundays — at 6:30 a.m. and 9 a.m., but not more than 1500 persons attended out of a parochial population that neared 10,000, although parish reports had consistently estimated and reported 5000 or 6000. During the previous year, 1935, there had been 20,000 Holy Communions. Problems, offensive customs and difficulties were numerous, but the new pastor confronted them squarely and courageously, and from the start he sought remedies.

More than anything else, spiritual work was emphasized, and the failure to attend Mass on Sunday was tackled. Attendance so increased that a third Mass had to be added, but there was still the question of those who lived far from the parish church — it wasn't everyone who had transportation. So it was a matter of going to them, and thereupon Monsignor Bienvenu began his remarkable work of establishing stations and mission chapels, with catechetical instructions and regular services, and organizing the faithful in the environs of such stations or missions.

In 1935, Father Viel had reported: "At Mr. Treville Guidry's for Catechism, Mass and First Communion." By the end of 1936, Monsignor Bienvenu reported: "Stations: Guidry's, seven miles from Church Point, Mass every other week, on Saturday; Catechism every Saturday; average attendance at Mass 250; Catechism class 35; great need for a chapel. Branch — Mass once a month in a private home. Lewisburg — Mass once a month in the public school — Mass at Guidry's, outside, under the trees." Already the pastor had 17 catechism teachers in the wide territory of the parish.

The parish societies were promptly reorganized or given a decided impetus, and new ones were formed. At the close of 1936, this was the status of the societies in the parish: Ladies Altar Society, 76; Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 85; Mothers' Club, 20; Holy Name Society, 67; Knights of Columbus, 78. Just what progress was made in getting more parishioners to join the various parochial organizations may be noted from the figures for the next year (1937): Ladies Altar Society, 80; Sodality of St. Ann, 96; Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 100; Holy Name Society, 80; Knights of Columbus, 118; Ushers Society, 10; League of the Sacred Heart, 940. Some of these were new organizations and they flourished at once.

In 1938, Monsignor Bienvenu introduced the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine with 21 members, and Study Clubs were formed. This was a great help for the pastor and his assistants, and it gave parishioners a wonderful opportunity to do direct work for the spread of the Faith. The ensuing year (1939), saw 25 catechism teachers at work for the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine and 500 children enrolled in their classes. There were two study clubs functioning with 30 adult members.

Spiritual progress went by leaps and bounds, as the energetic pastor aroused his flock to a greater sense of duty and obligation to God's service than ever before. By 1940, average Mass attendance

had already doubled and the pastor could report more than 3000 at Sunday Masses. The growing spirit of piety and zeal was reflected in the growing number of people approaching the Sacraments. In 1936, 24,700; 1937, 30,500; 1938, 39,200, and by 1940, he reported 41,300. The number increased steadily year by year to the great consolation of the pastor and his assistants, and in 1950 he reported to the Bishop the remarkable figure of 88,800 parishioners receiving Holy Communion. Truly this was a transformation, the work of the grace of God!

The number of Baptisms followed the usual fluctuations, but during the World War II years, the number declined to a low of 175 in 1945. However, after the war, the number began an upward trend once more. In 1949, there were 267 Baptisms, and in 1953, 230 infants and three adults. The Confirmation classes continued large, with the visit of the Bishop every other year. The 1936 class counted 314 children and four adults, and in 1938 there were 432 children Confirmed. Monsignor prevailed upon many adults who had neglected to receive this Sacrament to do so — 50 were Confirmed. The 1940 visit of the Bishop brought 479 children and six adults to the sanctuary for Confirmation. Statistics for ensuing years follow: 1942, 309 children, 5 adults; 1944, 382; 1946, 302 children and 3 adults; 1948, 503 children and 13 adults; 1950, 344 children and 29 adults, and 1952, 278 children, and 8 adults.

The pastor also made a determined drive to rectify marriages, and in this he was highly successful in the first three years of his pastorate. Afterwards, the number of Catholic marriages continued high. There were also many marriage rectifications at the time that periodic missions were conducted. The year 1936 recorded 75 marriages; 1937, 79; 1938, 73; 1945, 80; 1946, 92; and 1951, 70. Only since 1936, have there been more than two mixed marriages in one year. The largest number was six in 1950.

Monsignor Bienvenu started the first private Communion class at the age of reason with the opening of the school year for 1936-1937. Missions were conducted in French to bring the older folks back to the Church and the Sacraments. He visited families everywhere, all over the extensive parish territory. During his first year, there was no money for his salary, all of the revenues being needed for clean-up and needed repairs.

Instructions and Masses were held in different parts of the parish to enable people to receive the Sacraments, especially during Lent. Monsignor Bienvenu and the assistants never spared themselves in these visits to the far-flung corners of the parish area and to bring the word of God and the ministrations of the Church to everyone. Masses were said in the homes of Mrs. Valerie Bourque, Mrs. Philogene Thibodeaux, Mrs. Terville Guidry, Mrs. Gabie Daigle and others. Every two weeks, he offered Mass under the trees at Mrs. Guidry's for a long time. People sat on stumps and boards, but they had a sanctuary and a confessional under a canvas covering. Also under trees Mass was offered at Gabie Daigle's, before planning to build a chapel in Richard Settlement.

St. Edward's Chapel At Richard

St. Edward's Chapel was started there in December, 1938. Extension Society donated $1000, also sacred vessels, linens and vestments. The rest of the required funds were collected from residents and raised by festivals. Only two carpenters were paid — other labor was generously given by men of the vicinity. The plans for the new St. Edward's Chapel were made by Monsignor Bienvenu. Francis Kerwick of the Department of Architecture of the University of Notre Dame donated the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Extension donated the Sacred Heart statue. Dedication ceremonies for this new chapel at Richard Settlement took place on June 3, 1939. Already some 400 people were attending Mass there, and it was evident that a parish should be established. On June 17, 1940, St. Edward's was erected into an independent parish, most of the parochial territory being cut off from Church Point.

By the end of 1936, Monsignor Bienvenu besides having care of Richard Settlement, was having Mass every month in a private home at Branch and at Lewisburg at the public school. Every Saturday he had catechism at Guidry's. Already he had a corps of 17 catechism teachers helping in the catechetical work of the parish. Assisting him in this endless round of tasks was Rev. Ernest Moreau, his assistant, who continued in that post after the transfer of Father Viel to Carencro.

The 1937 report gave the mission status very tersely: "Lewisburg, chapel made from public school, visited every two weeks. Branch and Higginbotham, in public schools, every four weeks. Terville Guidry and Abraham Daigle, under canvas, every four weeks. We need a chapel near Richard Settlement, seating about 500, also a chapel at Branch."

The Lewisburg Chapel and Community Center

By 1938, Monsignor Bienvenu had plans ready for a new chapel at Lewisburg to replace the building being used. He was calling at Branch every fourth week, also at the Pitreville school.

Mass was first offered in the Lewisburg section on Friday, November 13, 1936, by Monsignor Bienvenu, in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Bourque, then in the old abandoned school, but the latter place soon became too small and the people readily realized the need for a chapel. Mr. Bourque, a pioneer, was mainly responsible for the chapel. A bazaar was held on October 12, 1938, which netted $659.45. An excellent spirit of co-operation was manifested on all sides. Monsignor Bienvenu drafted plans for the new chapel, providing a seating of 450 people. Extension Society generously gave $1000, plus sacred vessels, altar linens, vestments, statues and Stations of the Cross.

The new St. John's Chapel of Lewisburg was started in the spring of 1939, before the Richard Settlement Chapel of St. Edward was completed. The Lewisburg chapel cost $5705.56. It was formally blessed on October 15, 1939. A bazaar was held on that day, since practically every one from that community was present, and $1698.04 was obtained for the new chapel. The Bishop gave permission to keep the Blessed Sacrament there. Mass is offered in St. John's Chapel every Sunday and Friday, and Rosary devotions every Thursday night. Missions are conducted there regularly for the people of that area. The Sodality of St. Ann is well organized among them, and the St. Ann novena is held annually. This society takes care of the chapel and serves as altar society. At this writing (1954) about 250 families live in the area, and could have a resident pastor.

In 1939, the schedule for the missions of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Parish, besides Lewisburg, was as follows: Higginbotham School, every fourth week; Pitreville School, every two weeks; Branch School, every two weeks. The pastor that year reported to the Bishop that there was need for two small chapels — one at Branch and one at Pitreville. This same schedule was maintained during 1940, except that Lewisburg was served every Sunday and Thursday.

St Edmund's Chapel At Branch

The next chapel undertaken by Monsignor Bienvenu was St. Edmund's at Branch in 1943. He had started offering Mass at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Philogene Thibodeaux. Later, because of the number of people coming, he used the public school auditorium. Catechism was taught and First Communion classes were formed. While the chapel was under construction, Sunday Mass began to be offered at Branch. Owen Southwell, New Iberia architect, who designed the new Church Point church, made the plans for the Branch chapel, which was started in May, 1945. Extension Society once again came forward, this time with a donation of $2000. In addition, the society furnished the altar, sacred vessels, statues, Stations of the Cross and other furnishings. In April, 1948, St. Edmund's Chapel at Branch was formally dedicated.

During this intensive mission work, the parish plant was not neglected. Monsignor continued his steady improvements. The growing school roster called for more classrooms, so he moved

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School

the Parish Hall, which stood back of the church, to a spot next to the convent, and added two classrooms at one end, so that they could be used in combination with the auditorium. Also added was a completely equipped kitchen, which could be used for the bazaars and other parish benefits, as well as for school lunches. Porches were installed all around the old building, and on the auditorium side. All buildings were painted, gas and electric systems were repaired and improved, circulating heaters were placed in the classrooms and heaters in halls and Sisters' rooms, fences were put up, landscaping was undertaken and new fences were built. The parish plant really took on a new look.

In 1945, Monsignor Bienvenu and parishioners had become acutely aware of the need for a separate, and more suitable center for parish activities which by now had multiplied many fold, because of the new parochial and religious spirit, and the spirit of cooperation which had increased tremendously under the inspiring and enthusiastic leadership of Monsignor Bienvenu. Mr. Southwell designed an attractive brick building, to be known as the Community Center, with adequate facilities for parish gatherings and activities of the numerous parish societies, besides benefit affairs. This was constructed in 1945, on land between the rectory and the school, an excellent addition to the parish plant. The old barn was torn down behind the rectory, and a substantial and adequate garage and utility building of brick and concrete was also erected on the site. The barn had been built with the lumber from the original 1851 chapel. When the barn was demolished, Monsignor Bienvenu used the lumber to add two classrooms to the convent, thus the old chapel lives on in the parish in another form.

The Community Center

Another mission chapel project of the pastor was that of Pitreville. In the fall of 1944, he renovated and remodeled the old school there and made a chapel out of it. At present, Pitreville Chapel has Mass on Sundays and Thursdays, a yearly mission, and Rosary devotions on Wednesday nights.

The Pitreville Chapel

Besides the missions, there was another segment of parish work that commanded a great deal of interest and devotion on the part of the pastor. This was the School of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Monsignor Bienvenu made many improvements and promoted Catholic education consistently and energetically. When he took over the parish in 1936, the closing scholastic term saw 60 boys and 74 girls enrolled. He promptly stressed to parents the importance of Christian education for their children. Enrollment in September jumped up to 84 boys and 112 girls, a total of 196 pupils. The following year the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, who had staffed the school since its inception in 1915, reported a school population of 277. By 1944, enrollment had mounted to 467, and nine Sisters were on the school staff. The parochial school reached its peak in 1948, when the school handled 501 pupils, with a staff of 11 religious teachers. The Sisters of the Immaculate Conception did excellent work, and fired with the enthusiasm of the pastor and his assistants, promoted many activities, bringing wide recognition to the school, which participated in many projects, athletic and religious events.

However, in 1950, the parochial school suffered a serious blow, and brought deep dismay to the pastor. The Sisters of the Immaculate Conception had been formed as a diocesan religious congregation, and they started their school work at Church Point when that section was part of the Archdiocese of New Orleans. However, when the Diocese of Lafayette was established, the Sisters were outside of their original diocese. This question did not arise and was not settled until 1950, when it was decided by Church authorities that the Sisters should confine their work to the archdiocese. With keen disappointment and regret, they were obliged to withdraw from the parochial school of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

Monsignor Bienvenu faced the task of finding other Sisters to replace those who were leaving. He was able to obtain Grey Nuns of the Cross from Lowell, Mass., to take charge of the school in September, 1951, but only three Sisters could take up the work at that time, so four lay teachers were engaged, and the school enrollment was held down to 272 pupils. For the 1953 term, the staff was increased to four Grey Nuns and four lay teachers, as the enrollment was 292. As the staff of Sisters increases, the school will gradually return to its former status.

Monsignor Bienvenu's efforts for the spiritual regeneration of the parish were no less vigorous and consistent, and results have been remarkable. In 1936, there were two Sunday Masses, as was pointed out, but the attendance was discouragingly small, so the pastor went after this obligation of Sunday worship of God with no little emphasis and vigor. Mass attendance increased notably, and before long, two Masses had to be added, because the approximately 1000 who came to Sunday Mass had increased to more than 4000, and this despite the fact that there were Masses at the several mission chapels and stations in distant points of the parish area, and some of the parish territory was cut off to form other parishes.

The conduct of periodic missions helped greatly. Around 194?, the pastor began to have missions in French — universally spoken in the area — every year. Then in 1950, an English mission and a French mission each year were inaugurated. A triduum in preparation for the feast of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart on May 31, was inaugurated, and an annual novena before the feast of St. Ann was adopted, both of them drawing many devout parishioners. In addition, Monsignor Bienvenu visited families all over the extensive parish, always urging fidelity to the commandments of God and His Church, and greater zeal and piety.

The number of Holy Communions received in the parish, had grown from 24,700 in 1936, to 88,000 in 1950, a mission year. All of the strenuous and tireless labors of the zealous pastor and his equally zealous assistants with the bountiful grace of God bore much fruit. In 1953, the pastor was able to report to the Bishop that 92,000 Holy Communions had been received, in a parochial population of 8064 — both figures representing peaks in the annals of the venerable centenarian parish.

Rev. Michael Bakowski, Assistant

Giving much assistance and support to the pastor's program of spiritual progress were the parish societies, which Monsignor Bienvenu promoted in season and out of season. During Father Viel's time, these included the Ladies' Altar Society, the Children of Mary, and the League of the Sacred Heart. The Knights of Columbus also had a council in the town, which had done much since its establishment in 1923, to bring many men back to greater fidelity to the Church and their obligations, especially under the zealous leadership of Dr. Petitjean.

Monsignor Bienvenu promptly re-organized or activated the existing societies and established others. By the end of his first year at Church Point, 1936, he had formed the Holy Name Society with 67 members, and a Mothers' Club with 20. The Ladies' Altar Society increased its membership to 76, and the Children of Mary, which became the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary, to 85. The following year (1937), the Sodality of St. Ann was formed with 96 members, and the Ushers' Society with 10 men. The League of the Sacred Heart was re-activated and membership soared to 940, while 100 were enrolled in the Sodality of Our Lady. The Knights' membership went up to 118, and the Holy Name Society to 80.

Rev. Gene Speyrer, Assistant

Rev. Alfred Latiolais, S.J., entered the Society of Jesus September 14, 1889

The Confraternity of Christian Doctrine was established in the parish by the pastor, with 21 members, and a Study Club with 15 members in 1938. That year, the League of the Sacred Heart counted 1100 members. In 1939, there were 25 catechism teachers instructing some 500 children in the parish, under the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine program. Such was the power of harnessing the co-operative and religious spirit of parishioners of good will under capable leadership!

The year 1942 saw the establishment of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the parish with 19 members, and the Catholic Rural Life Conference with 475 members. The nèxt year, the Junior Sodality was formed with 75 girls. The Senior Sodality that year counted 40 members, the Altar Society, 105; St. Ann's Sodality, 134 at Church Point, and 72 at Lewisburg; Ushers, 34; Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, 20 teachers and 700 children; Mothers' Club, 90; League of the Sacred Heart, 1000; Society of St. Vincent de Paul, 21. The Catholic Daughters of America established a court at Church Point, and in 1950, they counted 35 members, and 34 in the Junior Court, but by 1953 these had increased to 75 ladies and 60 Juniors. During that year (1953) the Knights of Columbus had a roster of 205, and a circle of Columbian Squires with a membership of 40.

The 1953 report disclosed the following membership for parish societies: Altar Society, 102; Sodality of St. Ann, Church Point, 190, and Lewisburg, 90; Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, 50 teachers and 700 children; Study Clubs, 100; League of the Sacred Heart, 750; Ushers, 50; Mothers' and Patrons' Club, 80; St. Vincent de Paul Society, 20. Mass attendance was listed as averaging 4000 each Sunday at Church Point, 350 at Lewisburg, and 150 at Pitreville.

All of the increases in Church Point parochial population, and in membership in parish societies and Mass attendance and number of Holy Communions occurred despite the several dismemberments of the parish area. A number of new Church parishes were established in Acadia Parish, and in each case some of the parochial territory of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Parish was cut off, considerably restricting it. Such was the case in 1905, when the parish of St. Lawrence of Mowata was erected, also St. Brigit at Lawtell, May 31, 1920; St. John Berchmans' at Coulee Croche, July 11, 1928, and Richard's Settlement, already mentioned. In recent times, the section around Branch, where Monsignor Bienvenu had erected St. Edmund's Chapel, was transferred to the care of St. Leo's Church of Robert's Cove, Rayne. Despite all of these transfers of parish sections, the Catholic population of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart at

Rev. Emery J. Labbe, Ordained June 7, 1947

Rev. Paul Thibodeaux, Ordained May 22, 1948

the close of 1953 stood beyond the 8000 figure. It had gone as high as 9000 in 1950-1951.

Another arrangement which helped ease the burden on the Church Point pastor, was the establishment of a special church in the town for the Catholic Negroes of the parish area. After Our Mother of Mercy Church was established at Rayne for the Colored, the Josephite pastor, Rev. Rodney Auclair, S.S.J., put up a chapel at Church Point as a mission which he served from Rayne, also a Catholic school for Negro children. It is of interest to note that the pine trees, 100 of them, around the Colored mission, were planted by Father Auclair; by 1940, they had already reached a height of 25 feet. Finally, on July 23, 1951, His Excellency, Bishop Jeanmard, erected Our Mother of Mercy at Church Point into a separate parish, with Rev. John Barnett, S.S.J., as first resident pastor.

Such briefly is the record of progress during the administration of the jubilarian pastor of the Parish of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, but there still remained a major undertaking, which Plaquemine Brule folks had wished for and dreamed about for years, and that was — a new church. This is the great task, just completed by pastor and congregation.

A HOUSE OF SACRIFICE

IF so much was accomplished during the pastoral administration of Monsignor Bienvenu, by his direction and under his leadership, with the close co-operation of a willing congregation, credit is due also to the zealous assistants who have labored with him during the past 18 years in the Parish of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

When Monsignor Bienvenu came to the parish in 1936, Rev. ernest Moreau was already serving as assistant, and he continued in this capacity. He came to Church Point in September, 1933, and continued through August, 1937.

When he was transferred, the Bishop sent a recently ordained young priest as parish assistant — Rev. Wilton J. Labbe, who is so gratefully remembered by so many in the Church Point area. Father Labbe was no stranger to the parish. While still a seminarian, he had taught catechism during the summer at Terville Guidry's place in 1931, and prepared children for First Communion and Confirmation. As assistant, he made many friends by his geniality, zeal and endless services to the parishioners. He taught catechism at school, prepared children for First Communion and Confirmation, organized the Junior Sodality of Our Lady, and served as Scoutmaster of Boy Scout Troop No. 63. Father Labbe took great interest also in the farmers' economic welfare, and was active in the Farmers' Union Co-operative, and helped organize Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Credit Union, and the local purchasing and marketing co-operative. The latter bought its own cotton gin, which operated in 1944 was the Dixieland Gin.

With Monsignor Bienvenu's approval and support, he undertook a program of youth work which accomplished much. Skating parties, picnics and other social activities brought many closer to the Church and to greater fidelity to religious obligations through spiritual activities and projects which were interwoven with the recreational work. His Boy Scout Troop was regarded as one of the finest in the Evangeline Scout Area. It was with genuine regret that parishioners saw him leave, August 24, 1944, to take the post of assistant pastor at Kaplan. During his stay at Church Point, Father Labbe did much work for the missions of the parish, serving them faithfully, regardless of personal inconvenience or fatigue, and regardless of weather.

In 1940, because of the growing amount of parish work and the demands of the missions in the parish, the Bishop assigned a second assistant to the Church of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. This was Rev. L. P. Senesac, who came in January of that year and served until June. However, a second assistant was not again assigned to the parish until September, 1944, when Rev. H. W. Chmura came to Church Point. He served until May, 1945.

After Father Labbe's transfer in 1944, Rev. Alfred Gaudet was sent to Church Point, remaining from September through March of 1947. Rev. Marcel Gaudet was a guest in the parish and helped out

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in parochial work from June 1946, until January, 1951. Rev. Fidele Chiasson was also in residence and helped Monsignor Bienvenu from June 1945, to March, 1946. Around this period, two other visiting priests helped in parish work — Rev. Camile St. Pierre, January, 1947, to July, 1947, and Rev. Edgar Landry, June, 1947, to August 1947.

The next regularly assigned assistant at Church Point was Rev. H. W. Van Boxel, who stayed from May, 1948, to September, 1950. During that time, the second assistant was Rev. J. S. Chester; he served from June, 1948, to August, 1950. Then the present assistants were appointed — Rev. Michael Bakowski, September, 1950, and Rev. Gene Speyrer, June, 1951, both of whom have won the esteem and gratefulness of the parishioners because of their zeal, devotion and tireless efforts in their behalf, at the parish church and at the missions. During the winter of 1950-1951, Rt. Rev. Msgr. Clovis Mollier from Saskatchewan, Canada, was a guest of Monsignor Bienvenu, seeking recovery of his health.

There was another phase in the directing of the parish activities which was quite trying at first, and which demanded all of the prudence, ability and energy of the pastor, not to forget many occasions of anxiety. This was the question of financing the parish. Church Point was not different from all other South Louisiana parishes — there were always those who never quite grasped — or didn't want to grasp — the method of operation, and above all the source of revenues. For them there was always some sort of nebulous "source of riches" from which the pastor could draw to pay everything. Hence there was no reason for such persons to exercise themselves about contributions other than the traditional "huge nickel," sonorously dropped into the collection plate. Thank goodness there were such business leaders of the community and men of the parish who understood and realized what a pastor has to face and these were the staunch supporters and helpers of the pastor, together with those good Catholic families who had always done so much for their priests and their parish church, which they realized were their very own, personal obligation.

At the end of his first year at Church Point, Monsignor Bienvenu recorded total parish revenues of $9455.49. The building fund for the new church which had been started before he came, totalled $5187.07. The Sunday collections totalled around $10. The pastor went after this problem of support of the church by the parishioners. Just how energetically he did so, and how readily he was accepted and backed by the parishioners is reflected in the very next year's financial report — total revenues for 1937, $17,616.70. There were many repairs and improvements to be made, but Monsignor Bienvenu spent prudently, and carefully avoided debts. Bazaars netted $2344.67, and the collections and new church building fund contributions went up to $2889.39. In 1938, the parish revenues were up to $18,871.15, and the fund for the new church had reached $6600, but by 1939, the pastor could announce that the congregation now had $15,592.07 set aside for the new church.

In 1940, the pew rent and seat money had increased to $2622.62, and total revenues for the year passed the $19,000 mark. The regular Sunday collections amounted to a high figure of $1835.52, but by 1943 this had almost doubled, amounting to $3444.23. The total revenues for the parish that year amounted to $32,049.37. Entertainments and bazaars brought in $4309.22 in 1943.

These increases are all the more remarkable evidence of the grand spirit that developed among the parishioners, if we recall the disastrous flood of 1940. Church Point was about two-thirds under water and the rest of the parish was about as bad off. Crops were almost a total loss. The mayor and Monsignor Bienvenu worked hand in hand in directing relief work, and Father Labbe worked tirelessly in that time of tragedy to the people.

War came at the end of 1941, and soon Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Parish was sending off its young men to the armed forces. People turned to their religion more than ever, as the service flag of the parish added star after star and gold stars began to glitter here and there. Maneuvers for the men in training were conducted in the area and Monsignor Bienvenu was appointed chairman of the Defense Recreation Committee. He and Father Labbe together with members of the community rendered fine service to the soldiers who camped in that section of Acadia.

By January 1, 1953, the building fund had reached the sum of $21,630.18, but the war made any thought of building out of the question for some time. However, the finances continued to improve steadily. The 1946 revenues reached an all-time high to that period of $32,777.01. An envelope system had been inaugurated by the

The Presbytery after Remodeling

pastor for the building fund, and in 1948 he finally discarded the old system of pew auction, and substituted the seat collection by individuals, which resulted in almost double the revenue from the pews and increased also Mass attendance on Sundays. Just how responsive parishioners had become, and the backing they gave their pastor may be judged from the parish revenues for 1953 — a total of $54,032.39! Truly, Monsignor Bienvenu had accomplished marvels in the parish.

In 1951, pastor and congregation began to think seriously about building a new church. The leaning walls, buttressed by Father Roger, were constant reminders that something had to be done eventually, and the sooner the better. Plans were therefore made to move the presbytery to provide space for the contemplated new church, and at the same time to make needed remodeling of the old priests' house. This entailed inconvenience and the priests had to move from one part of the house to another, and to cook meals in the Community Center for three or four months. After spending some $25,000, the parish finally gave their parish priests a suitable house with more conveniences. Thus another major improvement was made to the parish plant.

Soil tests had already been made earlier in 1951, for the location for the new church. Monsignor Bienvenu consulted some of the leading men of the parish in the summer of 1951, in regard to the project of a new church. To all of them, the pastor and the parish leaders, the words of Almighty God to Solomon, as found in the Old Testament, applied in this case: "I have heard thy prayer, and I have chosen this place to myself for a house of sacrifice" (2 Paral. vii,12). And they applied in two senses as they realized — a place where the Great Sacrifice of the New Testament could be offered, and a house of God built at the cost of sacrifices. But they felt confident in the spirit of the parishioners, and it was decided to go ahead to collect necessary funds.

The first meeting was held on October 16, 1951. This included a group of business men who gathered with the pastor at the presbytery to plan a drive and plan a new church. The following organization was set up: Honorary chairman, Monsignor Bienvenu; general chairman, Mike Scanlon; executive vice-chairmen, Edward E. (Jack) Daigle, P. Roy Horecky and Ben Roy; secretary, T. Roosevelt Daigle; treasurer, Homer Belard; publicity, Oscar Guidry; board members, Noe Leger, Albert Venable and Austin Fontenot. The plan of operation consisted of dividing the parish area into districts and selecting names of some 100 solicitors to contact every person in the parish.

A general meeting was held on October 23 in the parish hall, with Mr. Scanlon presiding, and all members present. A letter was presented to be sent to 121 solicitors, and solicitors' sheets and receipt books were displayed — these for use by the solicitors. At a gumbo and meeting on October 30, more than 130 men heard the system explained and agreed to the drive dates — November 4 to 11.

Necessary material was distributed to the solicitors, who were urged to make a thorough canvas of the parish.

The spirit of generosity and self-sacrifice that actuated the people of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Parish was revealed at the meeting that followed — November 13. More than 100 men were present, and there was jubilation when Homer Bellard announced that more than $70,000 had been collected and pledged.

A meeting on May 6, 1952, at the rectory, organized a building committee for the new church. Edward Daigle was chosen as general chairman of that group, and Edward E. (Jack) Daigle as vice-chairman: Mike Scanlon, executive chairman, and Homer Bellard, treasurer. It was decided to retain the well-known South-Louisiana architect, Owen J. Southwell of New Iberia, to design the new parish church. Since Mr. Edward Daigle had been so active with the progress of the commnnity and such an outstanding citizen, besides having been the leading figure in the building of the convent in 1914, the group had decided to choose him to handle the building committee. At the May 9 meeting Mr. Daigle attended, and Mr. Southwell explained matters concerning the plans. Mr. Leger withdrew from the committee, because the Branch area during the summer of 1952 had been transferred to St. Leo's Parish of Robert's Cove. Moise Savoy, John Latiolais and Edward Thibodeaux were asked to serve on the executive committee.

At a meeting on October 28, 1952, Mr. Bellard reported that parish drives had brought the total of the building fund to $108,181.00. Another drive was conducted in November, 1952, and after a gumbo on November 18, Mr. Bellard showed about $23,000 realized, bringing total cash to date to $130,000, but he called attention to the fact that the new church would require more than $200,000. Oscar Guidry assured the solicitors that the new church would be started in 1953.

A memorable meeting of the building committee was called by Mr. Scanlon and Mr. Daigle on Tuesday, February 24, 1953, and Monsignor Bienvenu. The executive committee served as the building committee. Mr. Southwell attended to discuss recommendations of the group. It was decided to install air-conditioning at a cost of $30,000.00, and to use the altars of the old church. The shell of the new church, Mr. Southwell explained, would cost at least $93,361.00. The group settled on pink glazed wainscoating and pink bricks on the interior, and red bricks on the outside, also aluminum windows and screens. Separate contracts were directed to be adopted for the air-conditioning, the pews and the ornamental ironwork. Bids were asked for the new church.

On July 7, 1953, decision on awarding of the contracts was reached. Bidders present were, for the general contract: Robert Angelle, Breaux Bridge; Horace B. Rickey, Lafayette; and M. & L. Construction Co., Kaplan. For air-conditioning: Beaullieu Air-Conditioning and Heating Co., Lafayette; Butcher Bros., Lafayette; Barney Foreman. Lafayette and Rayne; and Guidry and Venable,

Lafayette and Crowley. Bidders retired to the dining room and the committee members and Mr. Southwell, the architect, opened the bids and discussed them. After full deliberation, it was decided to award the general contract to Robert Angelle, on his bid of $246,622, and the air-conditioning contract to the Beaullieu firm on its bid of $19,976.90. Construction was to begin within 20 days, and the church was to be completed in October, 1954. In addition to the expenses approved to be paid to the two contractors, the committee gave approbation to the $10,000 fee to the architect. This provided for a total expense of $276,598.90 for the new church. Six days later, July 13, the contracts were signed at the next meeting of the building committee.

With the actual construction launched, the executive committee of the new church building gathered on October 20, 1953, when Mr. Bellard reported $150,000 on hand. It was decided to conduct another drive to raise additional funds, and solicitors' lists were reviewed and revised. The campaign was set for November 1 to cover one week. It was decided to make it understood that the $32,000 for memorial windows would come from individual donations, separate from contributions to the building fund. The next general meeting assembled a few days later. Roy Horecky pointed out that parishioners were living in one of the finest parts of Southwest Louisiana, so they should be able to build as fine a church as any of the neighboring towns. Mr. Scanlon, who presided, congratulated the 75 men who responded to conduct the canvas. The gumbo on November 10, 1953, disclosed contributions and pledges of $22,134.89, so that the fund up to date was $161,300. Monsignor Bienvenu voiced his gratefulness to the workers and to the parishioners for their generosity. But he reminded the group that they still needed $1000,000 more, besides $17,000 for pews, $32,000 for windows and $15,000 for an organ.

Ground breaking for the new church took place on Sunday, July 26, 1953. Shortly afterwards, construction began, and the work progressed steadily. Gradually the parishioners began to see their sacrifices and their generosity emerging into a beautiful "house of sacrifice", their contributed funds transformed into brick and steel and concrete, rising above the prairie into realization, a dream of generations, and finally, a worthy place of worship for the historic Plaquemine Brule section, a place to unite for the offering of Sacrifice.

The spirit of piety, developed in families of the Parish of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, was reflected in the rise of vocations to the priesthood and to the religious life. Several young men of the parish entered the Christian Brothers, and nearly a score of young ladies joined the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. The first vocation to the priesthood was that of Rev. Alfred Latiolais, S.J., widely known Jesuit, ordained after the turn of the century. He is now retired and stationed at St. Charles College, Grand Coteau.

On June 16, 1907, a memorable day in the parish, Rev. P. E. Hubert, a newly ordained diocesan priest (but not a native of the

parish), sang his first Solemn High Mass in Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Church, after an impressive procession of children, men, and clergy from the rectory to the church. A reception was also given in the evening for the new priest by the parishioners.

The first native diocesan priest from the Church Point parish was Rev. Emery Labbe, who was ordained in June, 1947, and sang his first Mass in Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Church. The next was Rev. Paul Thibodeaux, ordained in 1949, but after he had begun his studies, Richard Settlement, place of residence, had been established into an independent parish, and Father Thibodeaux sang his first Mass there. Both of these vocations as well as a number of those to the religious life were the results of encouragement and religious counsel of the pastor, who has never lost opportunity to promote vocations to the service of God.

That recognition should be given to the energetic, devoted pastor of Church Point for so many labors, so many achievements and so much spiritual progress was to be expected. At the close of 1948, the parish was thrilled over the news that His Holiness Pope Pius XII had elevated Father Bienvenu to the rank of Domestic prelate with the title of Right Reverend Monsignor. After investiture in February, 1928, parishioners united to give their pastor one of the most notable receptions ever seen in Church Point. This took place on February 28, 1949, in the parish hall. This was in addition to the special program presented in his honor by the Sisters and the children of the parish school on February 25.

At the civic reception on the 28th., Town Alderman A. H. Arceneaux and State Senator Oscar Guidry were principal speakers, besides the esteemed President of Acadia Police Jury, devoted parishioner and ever-ready supporter of the pastor, M. W. Scanlon. Presentation of a purse was made by Roosevelt Daigle and Ludie Mae Hebert. A warm, grateful response was given by Monsignor Bienvenu, who was stirred by the sentiments of the parishioners, but this was the revelation of the great esteem and affection in which he is held from end to end of the parish, and by all classes, young and old, rich and poor. The church dedication and his silver jubilee offer another occasion for manifestation of this esteem and affection.

With the dedication of its new Parish Church of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, the venerable century-old parish closes a century of labors and travail and sacrifices, and under the leadership of an energetic, devoted and self-sacraficing pastor, goes forward into a future of great promise spiritually, a future opened years ago by the patient Jesuit missionaries, and towards which Father Eby, Father Roger and Father Viel sought to lead their flock. Monsignor Bienvenu has done much, but despite many labors, he continues tirelessly his efforts on behalf of what is most dear to his priestly heart — his parishioners.

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NEW CHURCH OF PLAQUEMINE BRULE

By Owen J. Southwell

A Catholic parish church is an important center for more reasons than one. It is far more than a gathering place for the faithful. For the Catholic faithful, it is the house of God, the place where Christ dwells in the midst of His people under the Eucharistic veil. It is a place where the great Sacrifice of the Cross is renewed under the appearances of bread and wine. Because of the sacred character of such a place, Catholics have always sought down the centuries to make their churches as beautiful as they can and to devote to their erection and decoration all of the finest artistry of man.

The faithful of Church Point have those same characteristic sentiments about their parish church as their brethren everywhere else in the world and in the building of a new church they manifested their desire to make their church as beautiful as it was possible, as impressive as they could, and as inspirational in its interior as could be achieved, all in accord with the wherewithal that they so generously gave and even sacrificed. These were thoughts that filled their minds, just as they did the minds of their leaders on the building committee under the inspired leadership of the pastor, Rt. Rev. Msgr. Clay A. Bienvenu.

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Church represents or symbolizes an offering of Catholics of that area to their God — an offering of artistry and beauty and the fashioning of building material into the most worthy temple with its altar of sacrifice that their means could afford, to Almighty God, as the dwelling place of Christ, Emmanuel — God with us. For these reasons as well as for the beauty and impressiveness of the building, the new church stands as the pride of Acadia Parish.

Early in 1941 Monsignor Bienvenu began conference with me on the development of the large piece of property available for the setting for a new church. Included in this development were a Community Building, the relocation of the Rectory, garages and home of the sexton with the necessary dependencies.

With the property of the Congregation extending to Main street it was possible to plan a wide approach with a neutral ground. The plot plan was studied with several minor variations and with the deliberation such as permanent development required. It was decided to proceed with the Community Building due to the pressing needs of the Knighs of Columbus and housing of library. Facilities for the use of the building for the general good of the parishioners were incorporated in the architectural drawings for this building.

It was decided to build with the splendid local labor and material was ordered. Before all of the required brick could be delivered, Federal orders stopped shipment of materials by truck or rail, due to the gloomy situation in Europe.

Not until 1946 could the work be recommended and the charming brick building with Indiana Limestone trim, aluminum windows, Vermont slate roof, fireplaces in the Library and game rooms was completed. The large meeting room twenty-four by fifty-four feet has an interesting open truss roof with the heavy insulating gypsum plank roof structure exposed and painted in harmony with the textured brick walls and stone trim. A heating and ventilating system and mastic floors complete the building.

The overall dimensions are fifty-five feet four inches by ninety-seven feet and it is crowned by a cupola forty-two feet above the floor of the portico with its four square Tuscan columns reminiscent of early Louisiana.

The Rectory was then moved and turned to face the west with wings added, and the circular drive on the east with its garage and home of the sexton forming a forecourt behind and south of the proposed new church.

On February 24, 1953 the Architect was commissioned to proceed with the final working drawings on the new church. Plans and specifications were issued on June fifth for bidding. On July 13, 1953 the contract was signed with Robert Angelle for the construction of the building and with Beaullieu Air Conditioning and Heating Company.

Left to right: Mike Scanlan, Executive Chairman; Homer Bellart, Treasurer; P. Roy Horecky, Executive Vice Chairman; Right Rev. Msgr. C. A. Bienvenu, Pastor; Rev. L. Arsenault, CSSR, of Ottawa, Canada; Owen J. Southwell, Architect; and Robert Angelle, Contractor.

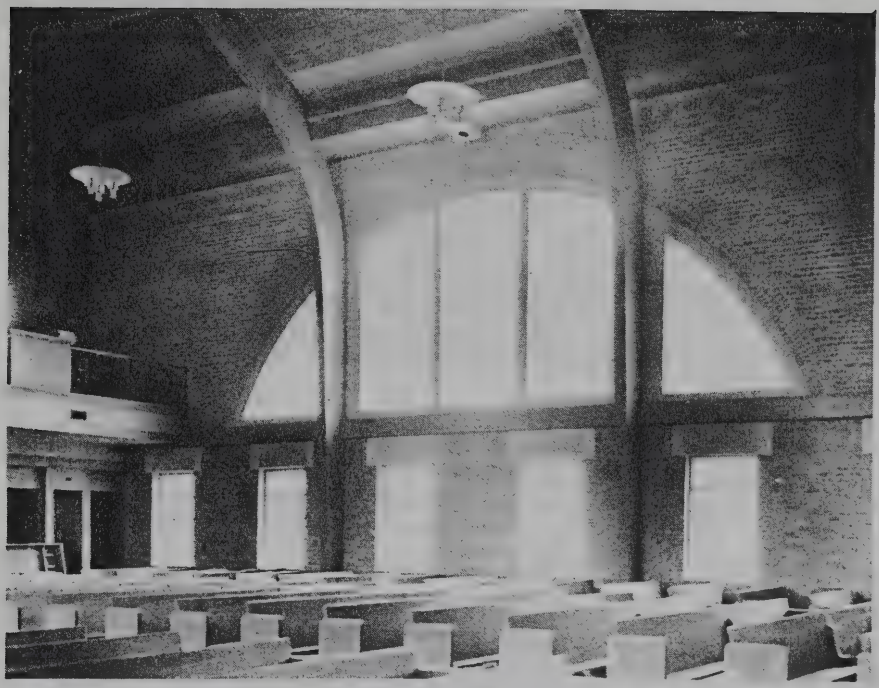
On Sunday morning July twenty-sixth the formal ground breaking for the new church was made before a large gathering of people who had just attended Mass or were coming for the next Mass. The weather was fine on that day and the project was blessed with particularly good weather.

The New Church

The church, which is cruciform in plan, is ninety-six feet eight inches wide and one hundred ninety-one feet long in its overall dimensions. The quadrastyle portico, of modified delicately proportioned Roman Doric columns of creamy shade stone resting on twenty-eight inch square pedestals, attracts the attention of everyone passing on Main Street. Twenty-seven feet wide and with ceiling twenty-eight feet above the terrazzo floor it projects fourteen feet before the forty-four foot facade, forming a shelter over the curving driveway approaching it from the north and south.

Two steps lead up to a monmental door-way of stone crowned by large triple windows twelve feet wide. Between the doorway and the window sill is a beautiful sculpture of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart inclosed in the symbolic mandorla form. She smiles tenderly at visitors to the church and her infant Son reaches down to welcome them into His house. Carved in high relief, they are flanked by four flying angels among clouds in low relief. One holds lilies and another the scepter of the Queen of Heaven while she holds Jesus. The two other angels adore Jesus and across the top are garlands of mystical roses hung from rosettes in the form of the Star of David. All are inspired by the Litany of the Blessed Virgin. The panel is the design of Owen J. Southwell and was carved by Albert Lachine of New Orleans.

The cream doors are ornamented with handsome Swedish iron hinges and hardware. An ample Narthex leads to two stairways and the Baptistry with doors in the north and south ends and into the church. Four banks of confessionals are ranged across the rear wall of the church with delicately designed wrought iron railings be-



One of the Four Large Picture Windows Inside the New Church

tween piers. The two stairs to the choir and the tiers of the floor are covered with rose beige Corlon harmonizing with terrazzo floors over the entire church.

Brick walls with glazed wainscots in a soft shade of Camellia Pink surround the Congregation area. The walls are pierced by twelve aluminum awning type windows on each side and the ends of the transepts. Above these windows, sixteen feet above the floor, walls are pierced by great arched windows divided into five panels, ten feet high at the center and formed of stone sills, arches and mullions. The center panel of each arch is dedicated to a Glorious Mystery of the Rosary flanked by a Joyous Mystery and a Sorrowful Mystery. The end panels which form the spring of the arches are filled with groups of angels flying toward the altar. They are executed in delicate colors, gold and browns on fields of light jewel-like glass, by the Studios of George L. Payne of Paterson, New Jersey.

The unusual plan of the Main Sanctuary flanked by finely designed walls and the Sanctuaries of the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph, which are placed in a diagonal plane, produces a most expansive effect upon the beholder, who can almost believe there is no larger Sanctuary. The flanking walls of the triumphal arch and the main Sanctuary are finished in beautifully matched panels of wood from New Guinea, deeply recessed in mouldings of beige and Wedgewood blue. The Side Sanctuaries, arches and walls are of

harmonious design of figured Red Gum. All of the woodwork rests on a marble wall of Breche Rose Saint Genevieve Marble from the Ozark Mountains.

A handsome tester and rear draperies above the walls of the Main Sanctuary are of a rich brocade grape design in an illusive shade of Fetal Mauve trimmed with festoons of the same material in gold, and fringed with heavy gold fringe, lifting the eye a full thirty-six feet. The altars are all of Breche Rose Saint Genevieve marble beautifully matched and quartered. This material is also used for the dedication slab, set at the Gospel side of the Sanctuary arch, and the window sills throughout the building. The Sanctuary floor is designed in light green, dark green and gold terrazzo and the Sedilia, chairs and Prie Dieu are of Swedish iron with harmonizing green leather cushions.

The communion railing eighty feet long is iron and aluminum on a terrazzo step which is broken by handsome arched gates framed in aluminum and the Sanctuary is the traditional four steps above the footpace. The praedella is forty inches above the church floor increasing the comfort of seeing the holy rites.

The ceiling, supported by subtly toned timber arches harmonizing with the walls, is designed in panels of Sonofaced Fiber-Glas acoustical tiles. The ground color is Wedgewood blue framed in beige and coral borders, with a design in Chartreuse.

The eight terrific arches, which form the intersection of the nave and transepts, describe a square upon which rests a graceful cupola. This reflects light from its windows on a large star of eight points from which are suspended lovely crystal chandeliers from the old church. Other lighting equipment includes six focusing and masking floods by Century of New York. Also used in concealed fluorescent tube lighting using soft rose and pale blue green. The combination produces an irridescent golden light.

Other lighting equipment throughout the building is a charming adaptation of large old country store lamps in gold and grey by Litecraft Studios of New York. The arched windows of the Rosary are lighted by exterior flood lights which also illuminate the entire building, whose red brick and cream stone trim culminate in a graceful tower, the cornice of whose open colonade is ninety feet above the street. A handsome cross of wrought iron springs from within the Colonade which surrounds is as a coronet. The tower is now a landmark of all roads approaching Church Point. It houses the fine toned bell made by Meneely & Co., West Troy, N. Y., for the old church in 1894 and weighing two thousand two hundred pounds. Her name is Marie Louise, in honor of the Virgin Mother of God and St. Louis, King of France. The sponsors were Homer Barousse and Elodie Daigle and special mention is made of Homer Barousse, Elodie Daigle, Thelismar Guidry and Ernest Daigle. A special new support and electric ringing equipment is installed by the Verdin Bell Company.

The new pipe organ will be installed, in its air conditioned chamber, below the belfry by the Wicks Organ Company and screened by handsome wrought iron panels by the Zephyr Company, who have also made the screen for the Baptistry and other work. The Mother's Chapel is entered from the Northeast door and adjoins the Gospel side of the Sanctuary.

Chrysler Air Conditioning with hot water heating will provide all year comfort for the occupants of the handsome new pews of Philippine Mahogany. The new design achieved by the Sams Company with Mr. Southwell and harmonizing with other handsome wood work is new in this area, but similar to installation in adjoining states. The church seats One Thousand Four Hundred Thirty.

Church Point is fortunate in its fine collection of statues which are redecorated by Miss Frances Oster and placed throughout the building under the direction of the Architect. The Stations of the Cross are redecorated and placed within the north and south transepts.

The curved wood reredos of the main altar and each side altar are cleaned to the natural light wood with some gilding and set above the marble altars.

Such are the principal features of the new Church of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, completed this November, 1954, and formally dedicated to the service of God on Thursday, November 25th, Thanksgiving Day — a monument to faith in God and His Church; an impressive expression of the Faith of the Plaquemine Brule, its people and its devoted pastor.

THE LAND OF PRAIRIES, POINTES AND COULEES

THREE important settlements and military posts served as frontier outposts in Louisiana of colonial days — Fort Saint Jean Baptiste des Natchitoches in the Northwest, the Poste des Opelousas beyond Bayou Courtableau, and the Poste des Attakapas at St. Martinville on Bayou Teche to the south. To these could be added a fourth which developed later — Le Poste des Rapides, near present-day Alexandria.

French soldiers stationed at these posts took up lands in the vicinity when they completed their service, but French colonists also entered these areas to take over land grants. Even before their time, French and Canadian traders had ventured from New Orleans "dans les terres" or "dans l'interieure," particularly in the hunting grounds of the Black-Leg Indians or Opelousas tribe, and of the Attakapas, reputed cannibals. These traders came for pelts, bear grease and other Indian products.

When the Acadian exiles began to make their weary way into South Louisiana after 1755, many of them settled along the Mississippi River and along Bayou Lafourche, but some made their way "dans les terres" by way of the Poste des Attakapas and the Poste des Opelousas. Natural born farmers that they were, the Acadian exiles looked upon the fertile soil of the Opelousas District and Attakapas District as the end of the rainbow, and there they settled, married to the soil in a new land that gave them hospitality. It is one of the glories of the Acadian exiles and their descendants that they were the developers in the main of South Louisiana's fabulous agricultural treasures.

Descendants of the exiles along the Teche moved westward and established farms on the prairies and the banks of the many bayous that meander southward towards the Gulf of Mexico. From their own language — French always — they gave names to geographical features. Where a clearing was made by burning away the underbrush and the prairie grass to develop farm land, this was called a "brulé" to which was added a specific name. Where gullies developed from rain water running down to some nearby stream, the name of "coulée" was given. A bit of highland was a "coteau." Any open tract of land was a "prairie." Where oaks grew in clusters, it was a "cheniere." Where a bayou or a "coulée" made a sharp turn or two streams joined, there was "la pointe." If a swamp or shallow body of water pushed its way into the prairie, it was "l'anse" or bay. The spot where a bridge spanned a bayou was inevitably called "le pont," with some specific name added. These Acadian geographical terms and others are found all through Southwest Louisiana, together with those for the ever-present bayou.

Along the East Branch and the West Branch of Bayou Plaquemine, between these and Bayou Mallet westward to Bayou Cannes, on the banks of Bayou Queue Tortue, around Coulée Croche, Coulée Chretien, Coulée Thibodeau and Coulée Meche, all through the prairie area west of "le Grand Coteau," farms spread, and Acadian descendants went in for cattle raising, horse breeding and farming. French Capuchin priests visited this territory, coming down from the Natchitoches Mission of St. Francis of Assisi or traveling inland from the Post of Pointe Coupee. After churches were established at Opelousas, the Church of the Immaculate Conception, which later became the Church of St. Leander or St. Landry in French, and at the Post of the Attakapas, which had St. Martin's Church, the priests stationed there made almost incredible itineraries of visits to the scattered Catholic families, reaching them by pirogue, on horseback or on foot, sometimes by ox cart.

Pioneer missionaries of those days included such zealous priests as Father Valentin, Father Didier, Father Jean Francois de Civray, Father Miguel Barriere, Father Louis Buhot, Father Pedro de Zamora and others. Until the time of Bishop Dubourg, second Bishop of New Orleans, 1815-1826, the Attakapas District and the Opelousas District were served respectively by the clergy from St. Martin's Church and St. Landry's Church. The Bishop established two new parishes in that area which were destined to have important effects

on Catholics of the Southwest — one was St. Charles Borromeo in 1819 at Grand Coteau, and the other, St. John the Evangelist at Vermilionville (Lafayette of today), in 1821. Thus the Church Point area of today was originally part of the Opelousas church parish, then it passed to the care of St. Charles Church, Parish of Grand Coteau in 1819, and it so remained for the next 64 years.

Acadian families had already taken up farm lands all through the prairies. At a bend or point on the west branch of Bayou Plaquemine, some 13 miles west from Grand Coteau and about 16 miles south of Opelousas, a large clearing had been burned out and because of its location on the bayou it was given the name of Plaquemine Brulé — the Plaquemine Burnt Clearing. Early families in that vicinity included the Daigles, Guidrys, Lebleus, Fonteneaus, Doucets, Legers, Davids, Fusses, Comeaus, Thibodeaus, Richards, Barousses, Bellards, Vidrines, Matts, Latiolais and others. Around the Brulé itself at "La Pointe" were the Lebleus, the Daigles and the Guidrys, all farming families.

For spiritual ministrations, until 1819, these families around Plaquemine Brulé, on Bayou Mallet and around Pointe-aux-Loups (Iota of today) depended upon the priests of St. Landry's of Opelousas. Father Flavius Rossi, secular priest pastor of the latter church, was the last from that parish to minister to the families of the Bayou Plaquemine and Bayou Mallet area. Then in 1818, Father Hercule Brassac served them from Grand Coteau, then Father Francis Cellini, followed by Father Leo deNeckere, who became the next Bishop of New Orleans, and Father John Audizio, appointed in 1826. After the establishment of the Lafayette church parish, 1821, the Plaquemine Brulé area remained in the Grand Coteau parish territory which was bounded by Bayou Queue Tortue and Bayou Nez Pique and Mermentau River, a line between La Jonction (Arnaudville) and Grande Pointe, then the line between Church Point and Opelousas. This covered about all present-day Acadia civil parish.

In 1837, an important event took place in the Diocese of New Orleans. Monseigneur Antoine Blanc, installed as Ordinary in 1835, was desirous of having a Catholic boys' college in his diocese. From the exploration days of Iberville and Bienville, the French Jesuit missionaries had labored in Louisiana until their disgraceful suppression by arrogant colonial officials in 1763. Bishop Blanc planned on French Jesuits to take charge of the college he wanted established in his See, but the French province of Society of Jesus was short of men, and the superior was obliged to decline Monseigneur Blanc's invitation for the return of the Jesuits to Louisiana. However, the Bishop took his plea to Father Roothan, the Superior General, and he directed the Fathers in France to make a special effort to provide sufficient missionaries to undertake the project in Louisiana.

On Christmas Eve, 1836, five Jesuit priests and two lay Brothers sailed from Havre, France. They were all from the Province of Lyons, destined for the new Jesuit Louisiana Mission. In this band of pioneers was Rev. Jean Francis Abbadie, S.J., who was to become one of the devoted, beloved missionaries and benefactors of the

prairies of Acadia Parish. They arrived at New Orleans in February, 1837, and began considering various sites for the proposed college. St. Gabriel College at St. Gabriel, La., and Mandeville, and Donaldsonville were considered, but discarded. Finally, principally for health reasons, it was decided to establish the college at Grand Coteau, where the Academy of the Sacred Heart, conducted by the Religious of the Sacred Heart of St. Sophie Barat, had been established by Blessed Philippine Duchesne in 1821.

Besides founding St. Charles College, a school for boys, the Jesuit Fathers were placed in charge by Bishop Blanc of St. Charles Church and its immense parish. For 117 years down to the present time, they have been serving the Grand Coteau church. The college was not only a boarding school, but it had also a day school, and in both divisions it proved a boon to the Church in that section. Planters and merchants of the area had been obliged to send their sons to distant points for a Catholic education — Cape Girardeau and St. Louis, Mo., Bardstown, Ky., Springhill at Mobile, later to be taken over by the Jesuit Fathers, and Georgetown College at Washington, among others. Now they could send young boys to nearby Grand Coteau, just as daughters went to the Sacred Heart Academy there.

However, the establishment of the Jesuit Fathers at Grand Coteau brought another benefit. Bishop Blanc realized the growing Catholic population of the prairies and the coteaus and the brules needed regular ministrations, and in fact, many requests were made by groups of Acadian descendants, Catholics all, for churches with resident pastors. But the Bishop was beset by a serious shortage of priests to meet so many calls. He felt that the assignment of several Jesuit priests at Grand Coteau would enable them to take care of the extensive territory embraced by the parish boundaries, and serve more effectively the many Catholic families living there, the care of whom was a source of responsibility and anxiety for the conscientious prelate. The Jesuits met all of these expectations of the Bishop.

The decade from 1837 to 1847 and a few years thereafter, was a period of preparatory work and visitations under the direction of the pastors of St. Charles Borromeo Church of Grand Coteau — Rev. Peter deVos, S.J., 1837; Rev. Theo. deTheux, S.J., 1839-1840; Rev. Joseph Soller, S.J., 1840-1841; and Rev. Florian Sautois, S.J., 1841-1847. Members of the college faculty besides teaching regular classes, also undertook many other tasks. They served as confessors at the Academy of the Sacred Heart and as instructors of Christian Doctrine there, and catechism teachers at the parish church. They also made long missionary trips throughout the territory.

Near the end of each week, some five or six of the Fathers would leave the college to visit their respective missions. The more robust went forth on horseback, the others in sulkies or buggies. They carried in their saddle bags, or in the vehicles, all that was necessary for the celebration of Mass and the administration of the Sacraments. Usually they returned on Tuesdays, unless some extensive

excursions or some special work, or distant sick-call kept them away for a longer period.

On horseback or in buggies or gigs, they travelled southeastward along the Teche as far as Jacques Arnaud's plantation at the junction of Bayou Teche and Bayou Fusilier, where the settlement of La Jonction (Arnaudville) was developing. Westward they cut across Coulée Chretien and Bayou Plaquemine, stopping at the home of the Daigles and Guidry's store where they offered Mass, gave instructions, officiated at marriage ceremonies, and baptized babies brought in from farms for miles around. Sometimes the itinerary continued across the prairies westward, to Pointe des Marrons and Pointe a George, down Bayou Mallet to Pointe-aux-Loups, and along the way stops were made for visits, for Mass, instructions, marriages and Baptisms. At other times, the itinerary followed Bayou Queue Tortue all the way to Mermentau or Bayou Nez Pique, and the same procedure was followed. On occasions they went down to Cossinade and Poupeville. Then by a circuitous route, they came back to Grand Coteau to take up class room work immediately, or other assigned tasks.

The horse was indispensible in those days. Distances in our era of automobiles seem almost negligible, but in those pioneer times of horseback or gig and buggy traveling, when even ox carts and pirogues were used by these tireless missionaries, the journeys for these missionary trips were interminable. Even the jaunt from Grand Coteau across the prairies and down the coulées to "La Pointe de Plaquemine Brulé", a mere 13 miles, was a matter of a couple of hours. But with such fatiguing effort, patient work and forgetfulness of self was the Faith revived or continued. Thanks to old "Grand'mere, Tante Louche et Cousine Patte" — and they were legion on the prairies of Opelousas and the Attakapas — as "montreuses de Catechisme" — and as religion instructors around the family fireside, Acadian families remained ever loyal to the Faith of their forefathers. Indifference ran rife but apostasy was rare — "un bougre est Catholique ou rien du tout."

The area beyond the Teche, and Bayou Carencro, and past the Queue Tortue, in fact all this hinterland, was off the beaten highway, removed from the busy artery of the Teche, and inhibitions and conventions were fewer. Clanishness and a distinctive rugged individualism prevailed for a long time. Even lawlessness broke out here and there, as family and personal differences were settled outside of the law. These conditions made the work of missionary and pastor very difficult, but his presence was timely and necessary to make God's law a living factor. Despite all the obstacles and dishearening conditions, the work went on down the years, absorbing all the lives of devoted priests who dedicated themselves wholeheartedly to the welfare and salvation of "les gens de la prairie."

Sugar cane planting and raising cattle and horses, and later, cotton culture, developed in the prairies above and beyond Queue Tortue and Bayou Carencro. Acadian farmers began to prosper, but for a long time their area remained a distinctive section of its own.

Still, as everywhere else, wherever an Acadian chimney smoked, there had to be a cross over the tree tops, and towards this goal the pioneer Jesuit missionaries were working patiently.

CHAPEL OF PLAQUEMINE BRULE

DURING the 1840s, the David, LeBleu, Guidry, Daigle, Fuselier, Breaux and other families were telling the Jesuit Fathers about their ideas and plans just as was being done at La Jonction over on the Teche, around Bayou Mallet, at Marais Bouleur and in the Pointe-aux-Loups area — that was a church or chapel for the Plaquemine Brulé section, where they could attend services, instead of making the long trek to the Grand Coteau church or waiting for the visits of the missionaries. Those were the days of Mass "a domicile" and that particular "domicile" at the "brulé" on the point in Bayou Plaquemine was usually the house of Pierre Guidry, popularly referred to as "Monsieur Guid." This is now the site of the home of Mrs. E. L. Melancon, to the right of the convent property. He operat a store there which attracted many farmers of the prairie, and word was passed on to them all around the prairies and the coulees: "Ga, le Pere va faire chapelle Dimanche chez Monsieur Guid."

It was ineviatable that such a gathering of people should give rise to a settlement. Already there was the Giudry store. Several farm houses rose above the prairie thereabouts and among the trees that lined Bayou Plaquemine. The place was already known as Plaquemine Brulé and "Plaquemine Brulé a la Pointe", so when the chapel was built there shortly afterwards, it was "La Chapelle a la Pointe Plaquemine Brulé", or "l'Eglise a la Pointe", and since it was the only church thereabouts, it became "la Pointe de l'Eglise" which in English after the War Between the States became Church Point. However, after the chapel was erected in 1851, the settlement was also called simply Plaquemine, and all through the Jesuit records at Grand Coteau, the settlement is generally referred to simply as Plaquemine.

Father Sautois continued in charge of St. Charles Church at Grand Coteau until 1847. Father Abbadie, who had come with the pioneer band from France in 1837, was rector of the College of St. Charles, adjoining the church. In February, 1847, Rev. Aloysius L. Rocoffort, S.J., took up his duties at the college, serving as prefect of the Sodality of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, professor of French, Spanish and catechism and confessor of the students. In 1848, he was assigned as missionary to visit the various stations of the vast parochial territory, besides serving as confessor in the parish church and for the college students and at the Academy of the Sacred Heart, and catechism teacher for the girls at the academy. He continued as Sodality prefect.

That year (1848), there arrived Rev. Francis Nachon, S.J., who was director of the lay Brothers and prefect of the library, while he pursued studies in moral theology, and English.

In 1849, Father Rocoffort was placed in charge of St. Charles Parish. The Archconfraternity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary had been established at New Orleans in 1844, promptly gaining wide popularity and spreading through the archdiocese. The Jesuit Fathers with permission of Bishop Blanc established a branch of the confraternity at St. Charles College, and Father Rocoffort at once promoted the devotion. When he took charge of the parish, he was also appointed prefect of the Confraternity of the Immaculate Heart.

All of these events and appointments had their effect on Plaquemine Brulé. Father Rocoffort was an energetic and zealous priest, who took great interest in the spiritual welfare of the people in the far-flung reaches of the prairie. This interest was shared by Father Nachon, another zealous Jesuit. However, this interest was far more than mere thinking — they both sallied forth and visited far and wide as Father Abbadie had been doing for the past several years. Father Rocoffort and Father Nachon were especially interested in the people of the vicinity of "Plaquemine Brulé a la Pointe", because of their goodwill and insistent requests for a chapel to serve their section. Their visits and efforts included also the eastern border of the parish, the section around La Jonction (Arnaudville). Wherever they went, they organized the people and arranged for church services, thus forming the nuclei for future mission stations and eventually parishes. Among Father Rocoffort's close friends at Plaquemineé Brule were Theodule and Joseph Daigle, who led the movement for a chapel, ably seconded by "Monsieur Guid", together with members of other families of the vicinity.

In the face of these persistent requests and the goodwill of the people, the Jesuit Fathers decided to take action in 1848. Accounts vary in regard to the procedure followed. The Grand Coteau records state that in 1848, property was bought at Plaquemine Brulé (Church Point) together with small houses that were located on the land. One of these small buildings was then used by the missionary on his visits for Church services. The price paid for this ground, say the Grand Coteau archives, was $120 — the lot measuring 120 feet by 240 feet. In 1849, the Fathers were discussing about the establishment of a chapel there, as a regular mission of St. Charles Church of Grand Coteau.

According to Edward Daigle and the account given by his grandfather, Theodule Daigle, one of the pioneers of the parish and one of its benefactors, and his brother, Joseph Daigle, another pioneer and benefactor, took the initiative in the chapel project in the community that was growing up around Pierre Guidry's store at the point on Bayou Plaquemine. (This account was given by Ninfa Guidry in The Church Point News of Tuesday, July 14, 1953.) The Daigle brothers began a search for a suitable building which could be used as a chapel. In the Pointe Noire area, they found such a structure owned by Mrs. Leon LeBleu, which measured 20 feet by 30 feet, standing on 400 acres of land. When approached on the matter, she insisted on selling both the house and the ground, asking

$400. The Daigle brothers wanted the building only, but they closed the deal, then rolled the house to the site bought by the Jesuit Fathers, which is the present site of the Sacred Heart Convent. Headstones in the cemetery still face towards that site, that is, towards the pioneer chapel.

As the records show, according to Edward Daigle, no bill of sales was ever written for this acquisition of Mrs. LeBleu's property, and she continued to pay taxes on it, thus retaining ownership of the tract. When she died, the land was divided among her heirs and later was purchased by Mr. Daigle for $35,000 — it is now valued at about $125,000. The house was converted into a chapel by the work of the men of the community, some time before 1850. It became known as Plaquemine Brulé Chapel.

This house-chapel was apparently too small and unsuitable, as the Jesuit records for 1851 state that the mission field of the Fathers was greatly expanded, and the annalist adds: "The building of a chapel was begun (1851) by Father Rocoffort, and completed by Father Nachon." Thus it was through the initiative of the Daigle brothers and the zealous missionary spirit of these two Jesuit priests that Plaquemine Brulé got its first chapel.

The "History of the House," one of the Grand Coteau records, states that on the land the Fathers had bought, "through the efforts especially of the missionary priests, Brothers (Jesuit lay Brothers) and staff of the college (St. Charles College of Grand Coteau), together with many people, a wooden church was erected, and a cemetery was laid out adjoining." Thus we know that the people of Church Point themselves, with the help of Jesuit lay Brothers and slaves from the college, under direction of Father Rocoffort and later Father Nachon, built their own pioneer frame chapel, about 30 by 60 feet. Also we find that the parish cemetery dates back to the year 1851, the same year and at the same time that the chapel was built.

Father Rocoffort, we noted, was prefect of the Archconfraternity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary at Grand Coteau, a devotion which had been inaugurated in the archdiocese in 1844, and had gained wide popularity. In view of this, he placed the new chapel under the invocation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and it was so known in the records from the beginning.

The property, originally purchased by the Jesuits, was patently too small and the pioneer Catholics of the community realized this. Thereupon, Theodule and Joseph Daigle generously donated 4.62 acres of land to Archbishop Antoine Blanc, who had readily approved the projected chapel. This donation was on November 27, 1854. The Archbishop required that property to be used for church purposes be deeded to the archdiocese, because of scandalous troubles that had occurred and continued in that era, as the result of parish church property being held by laymen and their consequent attempts at dictating to the Archbishop and the clergy. The Daigle brothers readily consented, and the Jesuit Fathers had laid

down this requirement, just as they had done at Arnaudville under similar circumsances. This ground donated by the Daigles, enclosed the original land bought in 1848 by the Jesuits. On September 21, 1872, Theodule Daigle, ever devoted to the Church and the clergy made another donation of ground to the parish — one-fourth of an arpent to the west of the church property.

Rev. Anthony Jourdant, S.J., was superior at Grand Coteau. After Father Rocoffort had begun the Plaquemine Brulé Chapel, Father Jourdant assigned him to the care of the Grand Coteau church, and appoined Father Nachon "visiting missionary to the Chapel of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Plaquemine." That was in November, 1851. Meanwhile, Father Rocoffort had previously attended to Plaquemine to the end of March, 1851.

He opened the now 103-year old parish register on the 25th day on March, 1851 with the Baptism of Octave David, son of Jean Baptist David and Marguerite Elmire Breaux, born October 28, 1850. The godfather was none other than Plaquemine Brulé's benefactor, Theodule Daigle, and the godmother was Evellina Fuse (sic). Father Rocoffort officiated at this Baptism, also at the next one, which followed immediately — the Baptism of the daughter of these godparents — Emilie Daigle, daughter of Theodule Daigle and Evellina Fux(sic), born September 6, 1850. The sponsors were Henri Jeanson and Darolise David. There were four Baptisms that first day at the new chapel, and Father Rocoffort performed them all.

The first Negro Baptism also took place that day — this was Cesair, son of Sylvestre and Julienne, slaves of Madame Antoine Guidry. Father Rocoffort also officiated at this Baptism.

Octave David, the first native of Church Point to be baptized in the pioneer Chapel of the Immaculate Conception in 1851, died not long after Monsignor Bienvenu became pastor and he was buried from the Church of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

The first marriage record found is that of Dupreville Bergeron, aged about 24, to Adelaide Blanchard, aged 18, by Rev. James C. Bruehl, S.J., March 4, 1856. Witnesses were Joseph Doucet and Sephirin Doucet. During the first year of the new chapel's construction, 1851, there were 33 Baptisms.

After Father Rocoffort was recalled to Grand Coteau, he was replaced beginning in April, 1851, by a Jesuit Father from France, a man destined to gain wide fame in the South and eventually to die a hero's death for people of the prairie — Rev. Antoine de Chaignon, S.J. He served the community at Plaquemine Brulé from April 6, 1851 through November 1, 1851. He served later as a Confederate chaplain, and was seriously wounded at the Battle of Shiloh, while heroically attending to wounded soldiers during the awesome battle. Later, he recovered, but died of yellow fever at Washington, La.

For a time in late June and early July, he was relieved by another famous Jesuit Father — Rev. Darius Hubert, S.J., who served as Chaplain of the Louisiana State Legislature, and blessed the blue and white flag of the short-lived Louisiana Republic in 1861. Father Hubert then joined the Confederate Army as a chaplain, and was aboard the historic first iron-clad, the Merrimac.

After All Saints' Day. 1851, Father Nachon returned to the Chapel of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and continued to serve its parishioners until All Saints' Day of 1853. It was during this administration of Father Nachon that he completed the chapel, and it was formally dedicated, apparently at the end of 1851, or early in 1852.

Father Nachon was re-assigned at the Grand Coteau college, and Rev. Joseph Roduit, S.J., who had just arrived and served as assistant master of novices, took over at Plaquemine Brulé in mid-November, 1853. He ministered to the people of Bayou Plaquemine section until September, 1855, but for a short time in May, 1854, he was relieved by an old friend of the Plaquemine families, none other than Father Rocoffort.

The year 1853 was one of tragedy and terror, when yellow fever struck Louisiana with a virulence and appalling harvest of deaths not hitherto known. The visitation spread to the Opelousas section as was the case in so many others. Deaths ran up to 13,000 in New Orleans, which was virtually a city of the dead, people scattering away from the city in panic and taking the infestation with them. Many priests, Brothers and Sisters died — almost all the Christian Brothers' community at New Orleans was stricken and most of them died. The Jesuits lost Father Paret and Father Visconti at Baton Rouge, and another of their priests at Spring Hill, where the fever ravaged also. During those terrifying days, Father Nachon wore himself out and virtually lived in the saddle, making one sick call after another across the prairie and the coulées and along the bayous.

In October, came startling news at Grand Coteau — the Jesuit Fathers had decided to close St. Charles College, but they retained care of the parish. Only four priests were left. Father Roduit bravely obeyed a call to hasten to Washington, La., where the fever raged, and he ministered endlessly to the sick, until he collapsed. Father Gilles was hurried to his side, and he too was stricken. Fortunately, Father Roduit recovered, but later Father Gilles died. On October 23, 1853, Father Roduit sadly recorded the first burial in the parish cemetery — Caroline Blaise, aged 14. There were many more white crosses, and graves appeared at many places at the farms of the Plaquemine Brulé area and on the prairie.

In 1855, notice came of the re-opening of St. Charles College, and with it came word also that Father Rocoffort, pioneer missionary of Plaquemine, was being sent to Maryland. Then, after Father Roduit had been transferred in September, 1855, Plaquemine Brulé folks met for the first time, a Jesuit who was to become a dear

friend, a devoted helper and counsellor for many years to come, the friend of hundreds of families all over the Prairie from Bayou Carencro and Bayou Teche down to Cossinade and Poupeville and all the way out to Bayou Cannes and Mermentau River — Rev. Joseph Anthonioz, S.J. He was born in the Diocese of Anecy, France, May 10, 1822, entered the Society of Jesus September 27, 1840, when 18 years old. During the War Between the States, he also served as a chaplain, while in Maryland for his Tertianship. Father Anthonioz labored for some time at Arnaudville, but his great work was in the Queue Tortue or Rayne section and around Mermentau. He devoted much time and effort also to Plaquemine Brulé. Besides all his missionary labors, he taught at St. Charles College, mathematics, and other subjects to the first division, and served as procurator of the Jesuit community. He died at Grand Coteau on August 22, 1891, aged 69. When he first came to Plaquemine, he was only 33.

Father Anthonioz's first stay in 1855 was brief. His place was then taken in September, 1855, by Rev. James C. Bruehl, S.J. He was an Austrian by birth, born March 26, 1811. At first he was a diocesan priest, then entered the Society of Jesus in 1846, in the Province of Lyons, France. After his novitiate, he was sent to Constantinople, working among the Arabs from 1852 to 1854. He came to the United States, and was stationed at Grand Coteau from 1855 to 1858. From there he served La Jonction (Arnaudville) and Church Point. He returned to Europe, where he died in 1865.

Father Bruehl had charge of the Chapel of the Immaculate Heart of Mary from the autumn of 1855, through October, 1856. He was temporarily replaced in the summer of the latter year by Father Roduit. Father Bruehl was a zealous missionary, and he rounded up families whose children had not been baptized and he administered that Sacrament to them. On one day, while he was at Plaquemine Brulé, he baptized 10 children.

The Jesuits who served the Chapel of the Immaculate Heart of Mary were not resident pastors. They acted as missionaries, and stayed over at Plaquemine Brulé only a few days at a time. The rest of the week, they ranged far and wide over the prairie on horseback, visiting families and giving instruction and administering Sacraments at the many scattered "habitations". In addition, they hastened back to the Grand Coteau College to fill their teaching assignments. Sometimes they doubled up, serving St. Francis Regis Chapel at La Jonction and the Plaquemine Chapel, as Father Bruehl and Father Anthonioz did. But the priest assigned to serve one of these chapels was usually more or less restricted to the territory immediately adjacent to it. Other priests were assigned as field missionaries to visit the more distant points, such as Pointe-aux-Loups, Prairie Hayes, Coulée Croche, Mare Boulere, Queue Tortue, Cossinade, Poupeville, Bayou Malet, Coulée Trive, Pointe Lyons, Mermentau and upper Bayou Carencro.

The work was difficult, trying and often discouraging. This section was pioneer territory. Life was in the raw and eking out a

living was rugged business. Money was scarce and missionaries hardly expected much more than the necessities of life, provided at various homes where hospitality was offered. Conditions were sometimes precarious and dangerous. The story of the "Comite de Vigilance aux Attakapas" in the late 1850s, gives an idea of lawlessness that prevailed among some elements in the prairies and along the bayous, hence the amazing difficulties that the missionaries faced in the field of labors, but they carried on nevertheless, and helped to lead many men back to God's law and respect for the property and rights of one's neighbor.

When Father Bruehle left to return to Europe, Father de Chaignon, to the delight of the Plaquemine Brulé families, returned to the care of the chapel and its congregation for All Saints' Day, 1856. He remained as the regular assigned missionary in charge, until April, 1859, but in between at intervals, he was relieved by Father Anthonioz, who won the esteem of the parishioners, and by the ever popular, energetic and genial Father Abbadie, a priest who was always welcome everywhere on the prairie. When Father deChaignon was changed in April, 1859, it was Father Abbadie who took temporary charge, while at the same time, serving as pastor of St. Charles Church at Grand Coteau. But from Plaquemine Brulé, he went off on a tour of the vast mission field, and Father de Chaignon was sent to Lafayette to replace the pastor there, temporarily.

During the rest of 1859, ministrations at the Chapel of the Immaculate Heart of Mary were provided by the following Jesuits: Father Nachon in June; Father Roduit in July; Rev. D. McKinney, S.J., August and September, and Rev. Nicholas Simon, S.J., in October. Finally in November, Rev. Florentius Achard, S.J., was given charge of the Plaquemine Brulé Chapel, while he taught lower grammar and studied theology at the college. He served also during the first two months of 1860. Father de Chaignon returned and served through June, 1860. Father Simon came during August, and Father Eugene Bonnaure in September. He was followed by Father deChaignon in October, and Father Bonnaure in November and December, 1860.

Sermons and instructions were given in both French and English. For example, Rev. Anselm Ussanaz, S.J., president of the college, came to the Plaquemine Chapel in April, 1860 to offer Holy Mass and preached in English. In May of that year, Father deChaignon spent an entire week at the chapel, preparing the children for First Holy Communion, a great occasion on the prairie. A long-needed improvement to the chapel was made in September, 1860. Two Jesuit lay Brothers and two workmen from the Grand Coteau College went to Plaquemine Brulé and painted the entire chapel.

Newspaper accounts state that the first school was established at Plaquemine Brulé in 1856 — a one-room place next to the church, with accommodations for 12 pupils. Mr. Chenet was the teacher, and later Mr. Ducourson taught there. Nearly all Southwest Louis-

iana communities of that period had such private schools, and invariably, catechism was taught to the pupils, and the pastor made his weekly visit to hear their lesson and give instruction.

Church Point evidently still had its school in 1860, as we find its schoolmaster (name not given), on a visit with his uncle, a French priest, at the college. With them as a visiting companion was Theodule Daigle, and all of them were dinner guests of the Jesuit Fathers.

The number of Baptisms in the extensive territory during the first decade kept within the 30-40 range: In 1851, 33 Baptisms; 1852, 35; 1853, 33; 1854, 46; 1855, 35; 1856, 39; and 1861, 29. During 1851, there were 19 Baptisms of the Colored, 15 in 1852, and 24 in 1862.

With the advent of Father Bonnaure as missionary in charge late in 1860, there was much tension out on the prairie and along the bayous of the Opelousas section. Discussions and comments were vociferous among the men as they gathered in groups in front of Guidry's store and other merchants' places along the road leading to the chapel, and at the hitching posts in front of the church. Latest news from Opelousas and from Lafayette and St. Martinville boded no good, and when New Orleans newspapers arrived, tension and anxiety mounted. "Ah bien, mon vieux, c'est la guerre, oui!" That was what most of the men wanted anyway — the very idea of those Yankees wanting to take away the slaves from the farmers!

WAR AND DEATH STALK THE PRAIRIES

THE year 1860 had brought the death of beloved Archbishop Antoine Blanc, who devoted so much attention to the Attakapas and Opelousas sections, and was responsible for the spiritual ministrations now enjoyed by the people of the extensive Grand Coteau parish. The saintly, heroic, energetic Bishop of Galveston, Monseigneur Jean Marie Odin, C.M., succeeded to the See of New Orleans early in 1861. He was a frequent visitor in many parts of his vast archdiocese, especially after 1865, and the prairie sections saw much of him during that period.

However, just about one month after his installation, the War Between the States broke out with the shelling of Fort Sumter. Excitement ran high in Louisiana, just as it did everywhere else in the South, and soon the news spread from Opelousas into the farm lands of the prairies and the bayous to the south. At the long lines of hitching posts in front of the Chapel of the Immaculate Heart of Mary on Sundays, when the Jesuit Father came "pour faire le service," there was much explosive discussion — slavery was a very vital economic question, because of the plantation work.

Father Simon came during January 1861 to Plaquemine Brulé, then Father Bonnaure returned in February and served through the month of May, conducting the popular devotions "du mois de Marie." Father Roduit and Father Simon were temporary visitors during the summer, then Father Anthonioz was once more assigned in charge of "the Station of Plaquemine" as the records say. During one of the Sunday visits, the congregation was electrified to hear the announcement that Pere deChaignon had volunteered as chaplain for the Confederate Army and that he had left for the field; prayers for his safety were asked.

Familiar faces began to be missed at the Plaquemine Chapel. At the hitching posts news went from mouth to mouth — "Yes, Lezin, he left for Opelousas to join Colonel Thompson's Home Guards . . . Hector, him, he's gone into the Confederate State Rangers . . . You heard about Giromon, hein? Veuve Fabien's boy — he signed up with the Yellow Jackets . . . Philo, he went and joined the Calcasieu Invincibles." And so it went, volunteers in the St. Landry Light Guards, the St. Landry Volunteers, the Pointe Coupée Battery, the Louisiana Cavalry. When was it ever known that Acadian men had failed to answer the call of their land!

Anxiety and grim determination settled down on the countryside. From the Jesuits at Grand Coteau when they came on Sundays or during the week, folks got word of what went on. Newspapers came in from Grand Coteau or up from St. Martinville, where boats brought them up the Teche. Then the Plaquemine Brulé community and folks for miles around were plunged in sadness — Father deChaignon had been seriously wounded at the Battle of Shiloh. Then came the disheartening news that New Orleans had fallen to the Yankees. The comments at the hitching posts were not pleasant, especially when alarming messages disclosed that Federal forces were working their way westward along the railroad, and another army was moving up the Red River Valley. There was much devout praying at the Plaquemine Brulé Chapel and the Immaculate Heart of Mary was besieged with pleas of mothers and sisters and sweethearts.

And still more news filtered through to the prairies and the coteaus — Father Darius Hubert who had served their chapel back in 1851 was serving as Confederate chaplain, and had been on the famous ironclad, the Merrimac. Father Nachon, their own beloved pioneer, was attending to camps and hospitals in the New Orleans area. Tireless, zealous Father Abbadie was with the Confederates at Vicksburg. Now and then word of some tragedy came — death of a father or a brother of some prairie families out on the battlefields of Georgia or Tennessee or Virginia. Father Anthonioz left for Maryland to make his Tertianship, and while there, he served as military chaplain.

In May, 1861, Father Bonnaure spent four days at Plaquemine Brulé, preparing children for First Communion. On Pentecost Sunday, Father Anthonioz went there also to help out Father

Bonnaure, making the occasion a very memorable one. The latter, however, was stricken sick, and had to return to Grand Coteau, Father Anthonioz being assigned to replace him at the Chapel of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Good Father Bonnaure died on July 12, 1861.

In September, 1861, the new Archbishop, Monseigneur Odin. came to Grand Coteau for his first tour of visitations and administering of Confirmation. He was a very energetic man, and remoteness of chapels or difficulties of transportation never bothered him. While he was Bishop of Galveston, he made visitation tours for years on horseback. On September 12, accompanied by Father Anthonioz, he came to Plaquemine Brulé for his first visit, and gave Confirmation to 99 persons. The invading Federals prevented the Archbishop's return to Plaquemine until 1865.

Father Anthonioz continued in charge of the chapel through the rest of the year, and into January, 1862, when capable Father Abbadie returned and served the residents of the Plaquemine area for eight months, through October. The chapel was then assigned to a new-comer to Grand Coteau, Rev. Francis Lespes, S.J., who served for the rest of the year. From March to October, 1862, he was relieved by Father Abbadie, and briefly by Rev. Conrad M. Widman, S.J. Father Lespes returned in November, and remained until February, 1863.

Father Anthonioz returned to "l'Eglise de la Pointe" in February, ministering to the Plaquemine folks until July, when Father Roduit returned for a very short time. The Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel was then placed under the direction of Father Nicholas Simon, who had served temporarily in 1861. He gave devoted attention to the prairie chapel and its scattered congregation until May, 1865.

Meanwhile, these devoted Jesuit missionaries, besides teaching at St. Charles College, providing spiritual direction at the Academy of the Sacred Heart, serving St. Charles Parish Church at Grand Coteau and teaching catechism at the latter and at the academy, were also journeying back and forth all over the vast territory in their care. Some incidents from the diary of Father Minister of the Jesuit community throw a bit of light on their work and difficulties. For example, an entry of 1862 says: "The horse Celer (Speedy) runs away at Plaquemine at night, Saturday; Sunday, Father Abbadie returns with one — a horse borrowed from Monsieur Theodule Daigle." In July, the Minister wrote in his book: "Father Abbadie, feeling the onset of a fever, is not going to Plaquemine." That he was a traveller is noted from many entries such as this one in November: "Father Lespes is installed as minister, and Father Abbadie leaves for Baton Rouge with Brother James Stuffler."

In November, 1862, one finds the first entry on a Jesuit destined to play an important role in the history of Plaquemine Brulé Chapel —Rev. Anthony Vialletton, S.J. "He is put in charge of the chapel

at La Jonction; Father Anthonioz goes with him." That same month, the diary says: "Father Lespes is assigned to serve the Chapel of Plaquemine and Father Roduit is taking him there to show him the place."

Pope Pius IX had directed Archbishop Hughes of New York and Archbishop Odin of New Orleans to lend their efforts towards peace between the warring factions of the North and the South. The New Orleans prelate had ordered prayers in all churches for peace, and for the first time had decreed the conduct of Forty Hours' Devotion in all churches of the See for that intention. The Jesuit Fathers promptly followed out the directives, not only at the Grand Coteau church, but also at La Jonction and at Plaquemine Brulé. What happened at the latter is related in the Minister's diary, November 19, 1864: "According to the instructions of Monseigneur (Odin), the triduum for peace is to be conducted as was done last year. The spiritual exercises had been announced at Plaquemine and were to begin tomorrow, but the heavy rains made us defer them to another date."

The Fory Hours at Plaquemine Brulé Chapel in 1865 did not fare any better, as the Minister's entry for December 14 of that year, discloses: "Triduum at Plaquemine: Father Anthonioz and Father Serra (who is to take charge of that Station for the future) assigned: 9:00 o'clock, Mass and instruction; 3 p.m., beads, instruction, Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Few people came on account of the intense cold." Those who have known muddy fields after torrential rains, coulées running with muddy water, bank-full bayous, quagmires and water pools supposed to be roads, and icy winds howling across the prairies from the North, only such persons can realize what the missionaries of those days faced, and similarly the devout Acadians of the extensive area, striving to reach their chapel for Mass or devotions, in ox-carts, on horseback or in wagons and buggies. Guardian angels were really kept busy! Under such conditions was the Faith preserved and extended among the families of the prairies and the coteaus!

After devoted Father Simon left Plaquemine Brulé in 1865, Father Anthonioz, who was serving as procurator of the Jesuit community at Grand Coteau and in charge of La Jonction, was sent to take charge again of the Chapel of the Immaculate Heart of Mary at Plaquemine Brulé. This he did from July through November, 1865. Then a new-comer took over. This was Rev. Jean Baptiste Serra, who had just arrived from Springhill College, Mobile, to replace Father Vialleton, assigned to that college. Father Serra was assistant of the Grand Coteau church.

Before he left, Father Anthonioz once more prepared a class for the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation. Archbishop Odin came to Grand Coteau in August, 1865, to administer Confirmation in the mission territory of the Jesuit Fathers. On the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, he came early

in the morning by buggy from Grand Coteau, and Confirmed 178 persons in the Plaquemine Brulé Chapel.

During 1866, Father Serra attended to "la Pointe de l'Eglise," but in the summer months, he was relieved by Father Felix Benausse, the rector of St. Charles College, and by Father Abbadie through September, then in October, Father Serra resumed his pastoral duties and continued to serve Plaquemine Brulé through June, 1869. Father Nachon was back in 1867, replacing Father Serra in February of that year, also Father Benausse, Rev. John B. Unverzagt, S. J. and Father Abbadie. In 1868, Father Unverzagt relieved him in August, and Father Anthonioz in January, 1869.

The year 1865 had brought the end of the war, and weary, tattered soldiers, many ill or crippled, started returning to their southern homes where a fight to restore their economy began, and political turmoil was beginning to boil over, because of the carpet-baggers and their corrupt practices, coupled with the race question which brought bitterness and clashes throughout the state including the prairie country. Poverty and bitter resentment prevailed widely, resulting in factions, and so-called "Regulators."

Came the summer of 1867 and with it an orgy of disease and death which swept Louisiana almost from end to end, leaving thousands in premature graves, New Orleans, Baton Rouge, New Iberia, Washington, Lafayette being among the sorely stricken communities. The epidemic of yellow fever spread into the prairie country, and few families of Plaquemine Brulé, Bois Mallet, Pointe-aux-Loups, La Jonction and other sections but had its victims. Many new graves were opened in the cemetery next to the Chapel of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the many other little cemeteries that dotted the prairies — all the way down to Queue Tortue, Pointe Lyons, Cossinade and Mermentau.

For the Jesuit Fathers of Grand Coteau, it was a time of tragedy, for the sufferings and losses borne by those of their flock and for their own wearied, sorely tried community. From September of that black year 1867 to the middle of November, the registers of Plaquemine Brulé Chapel show Father Serra as absent. Yellow fever struck him, but he managed to drag himself back to Grand Coteau, where within a few days he came to death's door, bu' fortunately he recovered and resumed his duties when cool weather set in. Congregations from miles around sent appeals to the Jesuit Fathers at Grand Coteau, Macedonian calls for them to come to them. Pastors had been stricken, so there was no shepherd with the flock, and when death hovered near, the Acadian was always acutely aware of the old saying: "Passe par la porte de l'eglise, et tu passeras par la porte du ciel." He wanted to be buried by the Church."

Some idea of the tragedy in the Jesuit community that fateful year 1867 and in its mission field may be gleaned from a few of the terse entries in the diary of Father Minister: "Sept. 17 1867—Father Nachon returns from Natchitoches, where he has given one retreat.

He has been sick. Quarantine stopped him at Opelousas. Sept. 22—Father deChaignon called to Lafayette. Father Abbadie arrives at Lafayette and is stopped there to serve the sick. Sept. 23—Rev. Father Rector called likewise to Washington, La., by Very Rev. Gilbert Raymond, who is sick there with the yellow fever. Father deChaignon is back. September 24—Father Nachon, still sickly, sent to Washington. Sept. 25—Father Raymond is better. Father Serra (Plaquemine Brulé) falls sick. Sept. 29—Father Nachon reported sick at Washington. Father de Chaignon sent towards Lafayette to call Father Abbadie, meets him near the village and learns from him about an increase of the disease at Lafayette and New Iberia. Rev. Father Rouxel (pastor at Lafayette) has been administered. Impossible for him to quit his post. Father Serra receives Extreme Unction privately, and Viaticum solemnly after Litanies. Sept. 30—A letter from Opelousas reports Father Nachon dying. Rev. Raymond unable even to administer to him. Father deChaignon already on his way to Washington. Oct. 1—Father Nachon dies at Washington. He had been out of his senses for about 24 hours. Father Raymond had himself carried in his bed to the room of Father Nachon and gave him absolution. Father de Chaignon arrived (at Washington) at about 11 o'clock, administered Extreme Unction . . . Stricter regulations for quarantine at Grand Coteau. Oct. 11—Father deChaignon reported sick, by letter of Father Raymond, dated yesterday. Out of danger, however. Oct. 13—Father deChaignon reported in dangerous condition—no means of communication with Washington. October 15—Death of Father deChaignon—highly edifying—at 10 a.m."

And so the fateful, tragic year 1867 passed into history, adding to the Plaquemine Brulé area folks' memories, further sorrows besides those of the recent war and its aftermath. Father Serra, so near death, recovered and two months later was able to come back to the Chapel of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. He continued his ministrations in 1868 and in 1869 until June. His successor at Plaquemine Brulé Chapel was devoted Father Anthonioz, who continued in charge until July, 1871.

The large number of people to be Confirmed in the Grand Coteau parish after the war, induced Archbishop Odin, after his visit of 1865, to return to the prairies. On August 5, 1866, he was at Father Gilbert Raymond's church at Opelousas, then he went down to Grand Coteau. Just what these visitations in the rural sections meant can be judged from the brief enry in Father Minister's diary for the Jesuit community: "August 7, 1866—Archbishop's Mass at 4:30 a.m.; breakfast in his room; he left for Plaquemine; 24 Confirmations. Dinner prepared by Madame Antoine Guidry." Two days later, he was "chez Madame Aurelien", where in her home he Confirmed 28 persons.

The Archbishop returned to the Grand Coteau area in 1868. His record book of Confirmation shows him on July 28 "a la Chapelle de Plaquemine Brulé, Confirmation a 90." He visited other churches and missions stations of the area, and on August 7, went

to Bois Mallet, where 100 persons, received Confirmation. This same mission was the scene of Confirmation on August 3, 1870, when Archbishop Perche, making his first visitation tour of that section, administered Confirmation to 48, then to 182 on August 7, at St. Charles Church of Grand Coteau, and 97 on August 14 at the Chapel of the Immaculate Heart of Mary at Plaquemine Brulé. On all these visits Monseigneur was always welcomed at Grand Coteau, and classes were well trained—Father Serra, Father Anthonioz, Father Abbadie and others saw to that!

During the first year of the War Between the States, the number of Baptisms recorded at the Plaquemine Brulé Chapel dwindled to 29 — that was in 1861. The year following, there were only 26 — the lowest number since the establishment of the mission chapel. The number in 1863 went up to 29, then to 43 in 1864. The year 1865 recorded the smallest number for one year in the whole history of the parish — only 15. But when Father Serra came in 1866, he got after the parishioners about having their children baptized and recorded — to have them merely "ondoye," he stressed was not sufficient. That year (1866), 95 Baptisms were performed at the chapel, and 131 in 1867. Two years later, the number went up to 114, and in 1870 up to 170 — a record-breaking number. Such were the effects of the spiritual labors of Father Serra up to 1869 and Father Anthonioz in 1869 and 1870.

The number of Baptisms of Negroes stood at 24 in 1862, but after Emancipation, there were only 15 in 1864. Father Serra worked diligently among the Colored, and together with Father Abbadie, Father Anthonioz, Father Vialletton and other pesuit missionaries strove zealously to prevent proseletyzing of Negroes by representatives of the Freedmen's Bureau and Protestant ministers, many of whom came down from up North. In the year 1866 Father Serra registered 27 Negro Baptisms, 31 in 1867 and 37 in 1868 — substantial increases over the previous decade when the largest number in one year had been 19.

Infant deaths and deaths at early ages were tragically common, as was the case all through Louisiana during the past century. Such entries as these from the records of Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel of Plaquemine Brulé occur frequently in the registers: 1866, Clairville Matt, 3 years old; same year, Julie Barousse, 14 months; same year, Hermosa Matte, 4 years; same year, Hermine Lejeune, one month; 1867, Alain Daigle, 23 months. Such lists could go on and on. Families out on the prairies and on the coteaus in those days depended on some "tante ou cousine qui a bonne main pour les accouchements", a member of the family who had a gift for that. All the old home remedies were used for infants—plasters of snuff and tallow, tea brewed with all sorts of herbs from the prairie, half of a chicken on the head for brain fever—and there were dozens of varieties of fevers—the wonder is that any survived at all. Then, of course, there were the inevitable "froteuses" and the "froteurs" too, who were supposed to have "powers."

The practice of having the child "ondoye" was long common—the midwife or old grandmother, aunt or cousin, always religiously

looked after that in families distant from the church and chapel. They gave private Baptism and later, the baby was brought to church for the other ceremonies of Baptism. Sometimes this was neglected and there were complications when it came time to marry. Common practice also was "le service a domicile"—Mass for the dead in a private home, a month, two months or a year after death. There was also "marriage a domicile." Even long after the Archbishops and diocesan Synods forbade these practices and insisted that services of the Church be conducted with necessary propricty at the parish church or chapel, the practices continued in the parish, until finally abolished in Monsignor Bienvenu's time.

Such is the story of the parish in its second decade—a time of tragedy, sorrows, war and epidemics—but a time that brought to the fore all the zeal and devotedness of the Jesuit Fathers, which made an ineffaceable impression on the parish, and laid strong foundations for the Faith at Plaquemine Brulé and in its environs.

FATHER VIALLETTON COMES TO PLAQUEMINE BRULE

THE last 12 years of the direction of the Jesuit Fathers at the Chapel at La Pointe de Plaquemine Brulé brought to it the labors of one priest who did much not only for the Chapel of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and its parishioners, but for the whole of the section now included in the civil Parish of Acadia, a priest long remembered and still spoken about—Rev. C. Anthony Vialletton, S.J., the last of the Jesuits to have charge of the Plaquemine Brulé church, 1871 to 1883.

Father Vialletton was a botanist and entomologist of no small repute, according to the late Very Rev. Albert Biever, S.J., who was under his direction as a novice in the 1870s. In fact, Smithsonian Institute gave Father Vialletton credit for pioneer work in these fields of natural sciences and furnished him with formulas for preserving and mounting insects, and rearing of larvae. He knew not only all the insects of Louisiana, but was intimately conversant with the flora of the entire South, according to the reminiscences left by Father Viever. During his stay at the college of Grand Coteau, Father Vialletton made a complete collection of the insects of the state and of flowers from Southern States. Unfortunately, both these valuable collections perished in the disastrous fire that reduced the college to ashes.

Occasionally, Father Biever wrote, Father Vialletton while in charge of Church Point, was permitted to take two novices from St. Charles College with him to teach catechism to children preparing for First Communion. In May, 1876, because of his knowledge of French, Father Biever was one of the two favored catechists who taught at Plaquemine Brulé. In 1918, this novice, who had become a priest, returned to Church Point with Father Diebold and conducted one of the most notable missions in the annals of the parish.

Father Vialletton had a passionate love for trees and flowers, and wherever he built a chapel, he planted trees, particularly live oaks. Father Biever remembered Father Vialletton as "a man of most gentle character, who rarely talked over a whisper." Only once did Father Biever see him with a ruffled temper. This was when as a novice Father Biever worked in the flower plot of the botanist priest, and unfamiliar with plants, pulled up the little plants and left the weeds in the garden!

If Father Rocoffort, Father Nachon, Father deChaignon, Father Roduit, Father Abbadie, Father Anthonioz, Father Serra, Father Lespes, Father Simon and Father Benausse had made many sacrifices and contributed much labor of zeal to the spiritual welfare of folks of the prairie around Bayou Plaquemine, Father Vialletton did even more. He brought them closer to the Church than ever before, and developed among them a great spirit of piety. This last decade of Jesuit labors at Plaquemine Brulé was one of greatly extended activities and establishment of several new chapels which became eventually parish churches.

Monseigneur Odin died in France in 1870, and the newly consecrated Coadjutor of only a few weeks, succeeded as the next Archbishop. This was Most Rev. Napoleon Joseph Perche, founder of the first Catholic paper in Louisiana, a most eloquent sacred orator, a most capable writer, and the idol of Louisiana Catholics for his fearless loyalty to the Confederate cause. His accession to the See had a direct bearing on changes in the vast mission field of the Jesuit Fathers, and in the erection of Plaquemine Brulé as an independent parish in charge of a diocesan pastor.

Archbishop Perche was an enthusiastic believer in the South. Monseigneur Odin had directed affairs of the Church during his administration at the time of the war and in the years immediately following with great prudence and with a conservative attitude. Archbishop Perche, however, felt that the time was ripe for expansion of Church activities and resumption of building of new churches, schools and institutions. The move was ill-advised, because the economy of the South was far from re-stablished, poverty was still rife, and political conditions due to Reconstructions Acts checkmated any united front of the people to take necessary steps to achieve resumption of normalcy. The Jesuit Fathers co-operated with the Archbishop's program of expansion, but with a conservative policy and a rigid avoidance of debts. The Archbishop wanted more parishes established and more churches to meet the needs of the growing Catholic population. These conditions affected the entire administration of Father Vialletton, and the work of the Jesuit Fathers in the area of their mission.

Father Anthonioz, who had served through 1870 as priest in charge of the Chapel of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, continued to serve the chapel to the middle of July. He was relieved for a time in April, 1871, by Rev. A. Usannaz, S.J., another devoted Jesuit who served as a chaplain for the Confederate forces in Georgia. Before leaving, Father Anthonioz suffered a serious loss—

his faithful horse which for so long had carried him over the prairies, was killed by a sunstroke at Plaquemine Brulé. One might note that the horse could not stand the rigors of the work and the sun, but the hardened missionary, such as Father Anthonioz was, survived.

The transfer of Father Anthonioz from Plaquemine Brulé is explained by the fact that the expansion program was getting under way. The energetic missionary had started with Brother Otten, lay Brother from Grand Coteau, to gather lumber with the people of Mermentau, often referred to in the records as "Mentau," to erect a chapel there. But work was delayed, as the Fathers were somewhat concerned, when Father Digby, a secular priest arrived at the college with the announcement that he was to be the pastor at Mermentau. However, nothing came of it at the time, and in February, 1871, Father Anthonioz and Brother returned to Mermentau and took measurements for the proposed chapel. In between trips to "Mentau," after Brother Otten journeyed to that end of the parish with tools, provisions and a carpenter helper, Father Anthonioz commuted back and forth from there to Plaquemine Brulé. Father Usannaz had to relieve him while he served as architect and contracting director of Mermentau. In September, 1871, Father Badoil who had served at Lake Charles, arrived as pastor of Mermentau, as the Archbishop had turned he chapel over to the secular clergy.

Undaunted, Father Anthonioz, who had been relieved of his post at Plaquemine Brulé, in July, turned his attention to Queue Tortue, which later became Raynville, known today as Rayne. Another radical move was made. Archbishop Perche assigned the Chapel of St. Francis Regis at La Jonction (Arnaudville) to the secular clergy and Father Cuny arrived with credentials to take over.

At the end of July, 1871, Father Vialletton took up his duties at Plaquemine Brulé, and he continued to serve there uninterruptedly and without relief until July, 1873. Then Father Anthonioz and Rev. F. Heidemkamp, S. J., served the chapel for a short time. The years 1874 and 1875 were also periods of labors at the chapel for Father Vialletton without replacements. In February, 1876, Rev. John Lafarge, who had attended to La Jonction during a vacancy there, was assigned to Plaquemine Brulé, but Father Vialletton returned within one month, and continued his ministrations to the people of the Brulé, directing the chapel and the parishioners of the environs continually through the middle of 1883.

Father Widman replaced him in 1877 and 1878, for a short time, as did Father Lafarge in 1876, and 1878. Rev. J. F. O'Connor, S.J., was at Plaquemine Brulé in September, 1877. Another replacement was Rev. Anthony Boven, S.J., in 1878. In 1879, it was Father Dubost, also Father Widman and Father Lafarge. Rev. R. J. Holanid, S.J., took the place of Father Vialletton in 1879 for a few days. In 1880, it was faithful Father Anthonioz back at the Brulé for a short

time, also Father Abbadie, Father Lafarge, Father Boven and an old friend of years previous—Father Roduit. A newcomer was Rev. D. Beaudequin, S.J.

The year 1881 saw short periods of service at the chapel by Father Lafarge, Father Boven and Rev. A. Laurent, S.J. The first two returned in 1882. In 1883, it was Father Widman and Rev. R. Herrmann, O.S.B., who served ad interim in Father Vialletton's place.

Archbishop Perche had made his first Confirmation tour in the area in 1870. When he came back from Europe, he returned to the Grand Coteau missions, and visited Plaquemine Brulé on July 18, 1872. As always, the Confirmation visit was made a memorable event, and Father Vialletton spared no trouble in preparations. Brother Otten and Brother Tench came over from St. Charles College to help out the missionary in charge, while the Guidrys, the LeBleus, the Davids, the Comeaus, the Latiolais, the Daigles and other families prepared a big country dinner for Monseigneur and the visiting clergy. Confirmation was administered to 78 persons. Two years later (1874), Monseigneur Perche came back to the Brulé Chapel and Father Vialletton presented a class of 141 for Confirmation, the largest to that time in the 23 years of the chapel's history. On the 17th of that month, the Archbishop gave Confirmation to 75 at Bois Mallet.

Father Vialletton took sick just before Christmas, 1875, and ever zealous Father Anthonioz promptly came over the Plaquemine for the Christmas Mass and for the next few days. In February, 1877, Father Lafarge passed through Plaquemine Brulé with Brother Otten and, as the diary tells us: "Four mules, two wagons and two workmen to begin his new church (at Queue Tortue); the Rev. Father and the Brother are to be absent for about some six weeks." By April of that year, says the diary: "Patronage of St. Joseph, Father Lafarge's church at the Queue de Tortue is finished at last!"

The missionary in charge of Plaquemine Brule was not less busy. The program of expansion which Archbishop Perche so desired was in full swing. Father Minister noted down briefly: "September 15, 1877—Father Vialletton left this week for La Pointe-aux-Loups with Brother Otten to build another chapel. Father Widman went to Plaquemine last Sunday." Father Anthonioz was ranging over the vast territory, especially around the Raynville section chapel, which apparently was built at Poupeville. Father Vialletton was organizing and serving Pointe-aux-Loups (Iota) community. He was in charge now of both Plaquemine Brulé and Iota. The December 14, 1878, diary entry states: "Father Lafarge goes to Plaquemine, Father Vialletton being at Pointe-aux-Loups," then on December 30, the diary notes: "Father Vialletton is back from Plaquemine after having been out 10 or 12 days."

An entry of February 11, 1879, records that "Brother Hagon goes to Plaquemine with a wagon and two mules, carrying there different things needed for the future mission." No explanation is

given, and the inference is that Father Vialletton was planning on a new church for Plaquemine Brulé, as a later entry reveals that he was collecting funds for such a purpose, and it was pointed out that the pioneer building was in a ruinous condition. The Jesuit lay Brothers from Grand Coteau are certainly due great credit for their contribution to the establishment and spread of the Faith in what is now Acadia Parish. They did actual construction work on at least four chapels of the prairies — Plaquemine Brulé, Queue Tortue and Pointe-aux-Loups. In addition they did maintenance work at Plaquemine Brulé, including repainting it and repairing it.

Father Vialletton spent himself in labors at the Chapel of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and at the one at Iota, teaching catechism, giving instructions, visiting the scattered families all over the prairies, having "services a domicile" and contacting his flock on horseback or by buggy. The work never ended. An example of the success that met his efforts is found in an entry in the diary for April 20, 1880: "Father Vialleton returns from La Pointe-aux-Loups where he had been for some time to prepare the children of the First Communion class. Last Sunday, he had 145 Communions and a large congregation, the largest he ever had, even during the missions."

During Father Vialletton's administration, once more yellow fever swept over the state, in 1878, and New Orleans was tragically stricken, as were many communities in the rural areas. Archbishop Perche, aged and ill, making visitations, stopped at Grand Coteau and the clergy insisted that he stay there until the worst of the epidemic had passed. At this time, Father Vialletton made arrangements with the prelate about taking over the land and the church at Iota.

The future of the missions of Grand Coteau was also discussed, and since the cutting off the Arnaudville territory for a new parish, and appoinment of a secular priest as pastor at Mermentau, it was evident that further changes would be made. Father Anthonioz in 1882, made his remarkable feat of rolling with teams of oxen the chapel of Poupeville to land that the Jesuit Fathers had bought at Queue Tortue, the name of which was changed to Rayne.

During that year, 1882, Father Vialletton emphasized the need of completely remodelling or rebuilding the Chapel of the Immaculate Heart of Mary at Plaquemine Brulé, standing since 1851, more than 30 years. However, he pointed out, the inhabitants of the vicinity were unable to provide funds for this project. It was then proposed to Archbishop Perche, that the chapel be rebuilt with funds of the Jesuit Fathers, if they would be reimbursed within 20 years.

At the beginning of 1883, the chapel at Mermentau again, and the one at Pointe-aux-Loups were withdrawn from the care of the Jesuits, and Rev. J. Chasles, a diocesan priest, was appointed by Archbishop Perche to serve the new parish which he established, to include the area around both missions. This left the Grand Coteau

parish with only Plaquemine Brulé and Rayne—the former in charge of Father Vialletton, and the latter, of Father Anthonioz.

Some of the Fathers were in favor of forming parishes in the mission area of Grand Coteau, and establishing rectories for resident Jesuit pastors. Others, however, were not in favor. Late in 1881, the point had been submitted to their Reverend Father General, and in February, 1882, he expressed his view: Rectories in the rural areas were not to be established, as some of the Fathers favored; if the Most Reverend Archbishop desired to erect parishes in these places, such parishes should be relinquished to him, so that diocesan priests might undertake their administration. This led to the relinquishing of Mermenau and Pointe-aux-Loups to Archbishop Perche. When Very Rev. Theobald W. Butler, S.J., superior of the New Orleans Mission of the Jesuit Fathers, made the visitation at Grand Coteau in April, 1883, in the memorial which he left with Rev. John Montillot, S.J., rector of St. Charles College, he expressed his views: "With regard to Rayne and Plaquemine, our future line of conduct is clearly indicated by the decision of our Very Rev. Father General." This was quoted above.

Father Butler made another observation: "Something should be done as soon as possible to prevent the chapel at Plaquemine from going to ruin." Archbishop Perche was bent on establishing more parishes, as he had done elsewhere already in this area at Arnaudville, Mermentau and Iota. Father Vialletton was faced by the task of rebuilding the Brulé Chapel, but sufficient funds were lacking. By dint of patient efforts, and by means of a most conservative administration, and as the result of the generous goodwill of those residents having some means, he had been able to gather $3000, but this would never cover erection of an adequate new church. In 1883, the Fathers preferred to turn over the Plaquemine Brulé Chapel and its territory to the Archbishop, together with the sum collected, to be placed in charge of a secular priest.

From the archives of the Jesuit Fathers of the New Orleans Province, we learn that additions had been made to the church building, and that donations had been received by means of which the current expenses were met. At the time that the Fathers turned over the chapel to the Archbishop, the records state: "We handed over a sum of $3000 which included the excess from contributions (over the expenses), a part of a patrimony which one of our Jesuits had assigned to the church, and the money subscribed by the people of the area." Thus the Jesuits gave not only of their own selves to Plaquemine Brulé, but even personal funds from inheritance. Such was their spirit of devotedness!

The farming area was steadily developing, and many new families were coming into the area. During 1882, the last full year that Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel was cared for by the Jesuit Fathers, Father Vialletton reported 132 Baptisms—a heavy increase over the 19 Baptisms of 1851, the first year for the pioneer chapel. His work was tireless. He knew every family on the prairie and everyone knew him. He gave great attention to catechetical in-

structions to the children, and always he made First Communion Day and Confirmation memorable events. For example, one such occasion was July 5, 1882, when he arranged for the brass band at St. Charles College to come over to Plaquemine Brulé for the First Communion ceremonies. This meant that the college students had to leave Grand Coteau at 3 a.m., in order to get to the Brulé in time for the early Mass. They spent the day with Father Vialletton and his flock, providing music for the ceremonies and a concert for the people—Plaquemine Brulé was agog that day. The Father Minister's diary reported that the band and the visitors returned to the college "at 6 p.m.—all delighted!"

Father Vialletton was a man of foresight and vision. He knew that the parish would need more land for parochial facilities in the years to come, so in 1872, September 21, he bought from Celina Fux, widow of Joseph Daigle, in the name of Archbishop Perche, "11 and three-quarters arpents of prairie" at Plaquemine Brulé, for $116.25. The act of sale was passed before William Erskine, Notary Public for St. Landry Parish. The land at the time was bounded by the property of P. L. Guidry, Etienne Latiolais, Onezime Comeaux, Eby Nillan and Jules Daird.

In the Grand Coteau records, Plaquemine is referred to in 1882 for the first time as Church Point.

Early in 1883, decision had been reached to relinquish Plaquemine Brule Chapel to the Archbishop, and the latter agreed to the transfer. During June of that year, Father Vialletton made the simple announcement at Sunday Mass—the Jesuit Fathers were withdrawing, and a secular priest would arrive shortly to take charge of the parish church. Yes, this was henceforth to be a parish church, as they were now organized into a regular Church parish. Around the hitching posts that extended in a double row for a long distance along the road to the chapel, there was sincere regret, but there was also speculation about the new priest. For the first time after 32 years under the direction of the Jesuit Fathers, they were to have a full-time pastor, a resident priest in their midst.

Thus ended in the prairies of La Pointe de l'eglise in the Plaquemine Brulé section, the zealous labors of Jesuit missionaries, begun in 1837, when they established themselves at Grand Coteau. There remained in their care now only Rayne of all their chapels and mission stations, and the mother parish of St. Charles, after 46 years of missionary work. In the vast territory extending from the upper Teche to Mermentau River and along Bayou Queue Tortue, up to the confines of the mother parish of St. Landry, scores of devoted, zealous, energetic Jesuit priests had toiled patiently for decades. organizing the faithful, preserving the Faith, and inculcating its principles in the hearts and minds of thousands of little children, the hope for the future of the Church in that section, besides bringing to previously neglected Acadian families the ministrations and consolations and services of the Church. By that time (1883) four parishes had already been carved from the original Jesuit mission field—today there are 10. The spiritual achievements

and contributions in that area were tremendous, and the preservation of the Faith among so many families and the spirit of piety that developed, may be justly credited to their tireless labors.

Father Vialletton, Father Anthonioz, Father Abbadie, Father Serra, Father Rocoffort, Father deChaignon—these are names still remembered on the prairies and along the coulées and bayous of Acadia Parish.

When the Plaquemine Brulé chapel was taken over by a diocesan priest, Father Vialletton was sent to New Orleans where he was stationed at the Church of the Immaculate Conception. He served also as chaplain for the Monastery of the Poor Clares. On August 4, 1893, he celebrated the golden jubilee of his entrance into the Society of Jesus. On December 21, 1900, the beloved former missionary of Church Point—17 years after giving up his care of that mission—observed the golden jubilee of his ordination to the priesthood.

It is one of the glories of Church Point that it had among the Jesuit Fathers who served it for more than 30 years, some of the most eminent priests of that order in the country, men of saintly and heroic lives, devoted to the South and its people, noted educators and sacred orators, and not the least among them was Father Vialletton, widely recognized botanist and entomologist who did some of his most highly valuable work in those fields in the Plaquemine Brulé section.

THE NEW PARISH OF THE SACRED HEART OF MARY

ARCHBISHOP Perche accepted the chapel of Plaquemine Brulé from the Jesuits and at the beginning of the summer of 1883, he erected the section served from that chapel into a church parish. As the first pastor from the diocesan clergy, he chose Rev. Auguste Vincent Eby, then pastor of the Church of the Immaculate Conception at Washington, La. The new priest took over his duties at Church Pointe on July 1, 1883.

Already at that time the locality was known by the English translation of its old name—la Pointe de l'Eglise—Church Point. During that decade, a post office was established in the town and it was given the English name. Church Point was formally incorporated as a town in 1891, and the first Mayor was Homer Barousse, the son of Jean Barousse who came from France. The population was then approximately 500. Father Eby estimated the Catholic population of the area, i.e., the church parish, at about 3000 persons.

Father Abbadie prepared a map to define the parish boundaries between the parish of Grand Coteau and the new church parish. The principal natural lines consisted of Coulée Thibodeaux and Coulée

Chretien, which ran roughly north and south, and into these ran Coulée Senegal from the east, and Coulée Meche from the west. On the Church Point side were "les habitations" belonging to Leon Thibodeau, Dumas and Placide Thibodeau, Simon, Colignon, Lalanne and Willis. Father Abbadie furnished a copy of this map to Father Eby.

The new Parish of "l'Eglise du Sacre Coeur de Marie" extended westward to Bayou Mallet. Father Eby had a set of three maps prepared, giving a general perspective of the parish territory, and on these were spotted locations of the principal farmhouses. The first of these covered the area between the East Branch and the West Branch of Bayou Plaquemine, showing some 50 land-owners. Among them were many parishioners, such as Daigle, Guidry, Garrigues, Harman, Matt, Dr. Donovan, Doucet, Hayes, Andrus, Carell, Clarke, Carus, Hightower, Lyons, Johnson, Guidry, Robertson, MacLanon, Huffpower, Wills, Welsh, Murphy, Steward, Slaughter, Forman, Brunner, Bellard, and Lebleu. This indicates that descendants of many nationalities, other than Acadians, had already moved into the area.

The second map shows the section, "Plaquemine a Pointe des Marrons et Mallet, jusqu'a la Pointe a George," with some 89 land-owners, including among others: Leger, Carriere, Richard, Blaise, Stagg, Fontenot, Landry, Barousse, Lavergne, Latiolais, Leboeuf, Thibodeau, Gauthreaux, Ledoux, Arabi, Daigle, Olivier, Andrepont, Guidry and Blanchard.

The third map showed the southwestern part, south from "Pointe a George et droite de la Pointe des Marrons", and westward to Bayou Mermentau and Bayou des Cannes. In the center was Pointe-aux-Loups. Fifty-three land-owners are indicated. Among landmarks is Carroll's Store, opposite the church cemetery.

Father Eby was a native of Oerigueux, Dordogne, France, born January 21, 1856, so he was only 27 years old when he assumed the pastorate at Church Point. Right after his ordination as a priest in 1879, he was assigned as assistant to Very Rev. Gilbert Raymond, the Dean of the Opelousas Deanery and pastor of St. Landry's Church of Opelousas. Father Eby had been ordained to the diaconate in that church by Archbishop Perche in 1878, while he sojourned at Grand Coteau during the great yellow fever epidemic of 1878. Father Eby served the many, far-flung missions of St. Landry's Church until 1881, when he was sent to Washington, La., as pastor. It was from that pastorate that he was transferred to take charge of the new Parish of the Sacred Heart of Mary.

During the missionary period of Plaquemine Brulé under the direction of the Jesuit Fathers, the chapel there had been designated as Chapel of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, but by the time Father Eby took over in 1883, it was already known as "l'Eglise du Sacre Coeur de Marie", and the church continued under that name in all of Father Eby's reports. He also, from the start of his pastorate, referred to the community as Church Point. The name of Plaque-

mine Brulé was abandoned, except among the old residents who continued to use the old designation. The area was part of the civil Parish of St. Landry, but not long afterwards, it became part of the newly established Acadia Parish. The church parish was then part of the Archdiocese of New Orleans and it continued thus until 1918, when the new Diocese of Lafayette was created.

When Father Eby arrived in July at Church Point, he found the pioneer chapel with living quarters in the back part of the church in bad condition. Despite Father Vialletton's efforts, parishioners had been unable to provide sufficient funds to build a new church the money collected amounted to only $3000, but that was a sixeable fund for those days, if we use the church financial reports as a norm. With this as a nucleus, Father Eby set to work to collect additional money, arousing the people of the vicinity to a realization of the need for a larger, substantial parish church for their community. Jean Barousse and the Guidrys were great backers of Father Eby, and other old families joined them in the big project for a new church.

The erection of the new building required courage aand determination, besides much self-sacrifice on the part of Father Eby. There were many parishioners who were loyal helpers of the pastor, but there were many also who were infected with that peculiar smoldering anti-clericalism that marked nearly all of South Louisiana, despite the staunch profession of Catholicism, especially among the majority of the men. Many a man of the era passed up Sunday Mass, Easter duties, the Lenten fast and the prescribed days of abstinence, kept aloof from the priest and had his own ideas about him, but he wouldn't hesitate to say, as big as your arm: "Je va pas courrir a l'eglise comme les bigottes, mais je suis Catholique, moi!"

The Jesuit Fathers had fought against this spirit and the Jansenistic ideas that kept so many away from the Sacraments, but with only limited success, as was the case in every church parish of Louisiana, during most of the past century. What conditions were that Father Eby faced may be gleaned from his first parochial report, for example. For the period from July 1, 1884, to July 1, 1885, he reported about 3000 souls under his spiritual care—2600 whites and about 400 Negroes. Of these only 1600 or about half received Holy Communion or made their Easter duties! For that period, he had 140 Baptisms, including 10 adults; 14 marriages, and 20 funerals. The First Communion class that year had 75 children.

Besides this lack of religious spirit, Father Eby faced the dire financial difficulty which the Archdiocese faced, resulting from indebtedness that piled up after the War Between the States and the panic of 1873-1874. Archbishop Perche died in December, 1883, and Monseigneur Francis Xavier Leray succeeded to the See. The new Archbishop was confronted by beart-breaking problems, and he turned to the parishes to help pay off the debt. Besides this, he imposed most stringent regulations in regard parishes assuming any further debts. However, because of the dire need for a new

church for his parish, Father Eby was able to get Archbishop Leray's permission to go forward with his project. With the limited sum on hand, Father Eby had to borrow money. His great helper was Jean Barousse, who loaned the money without any interest.

The loan, however, was not the only source of funds—there was also the personal money of the self-sacrificing and generous pastor. Archbishop Leray had ordered the priests of the archdiocese to conduct all their correspondence in English, so Father Eby dutifully complied, as the prelate desired his clergy to conform with the language of this country. His early letters, however, were evidently thought out in French and translated into English on paper, often giving them a very quaint twist. Monseigneur Leray died in France in 1887, and the following year (1888) Archbishop Francis Janssens became the new Ordinary. Father Eby continued his English letters in his own style. In many parishes of the archdiocese, generous pastors had been advancing or lending their personal funds, often money and family legacies, to their parishes for church buildings. Some filed claims for reimbursement, so Archbishop Janssens laid down the regulation that such matters had to be settled at once, and no such loans would be permitted henceforth.

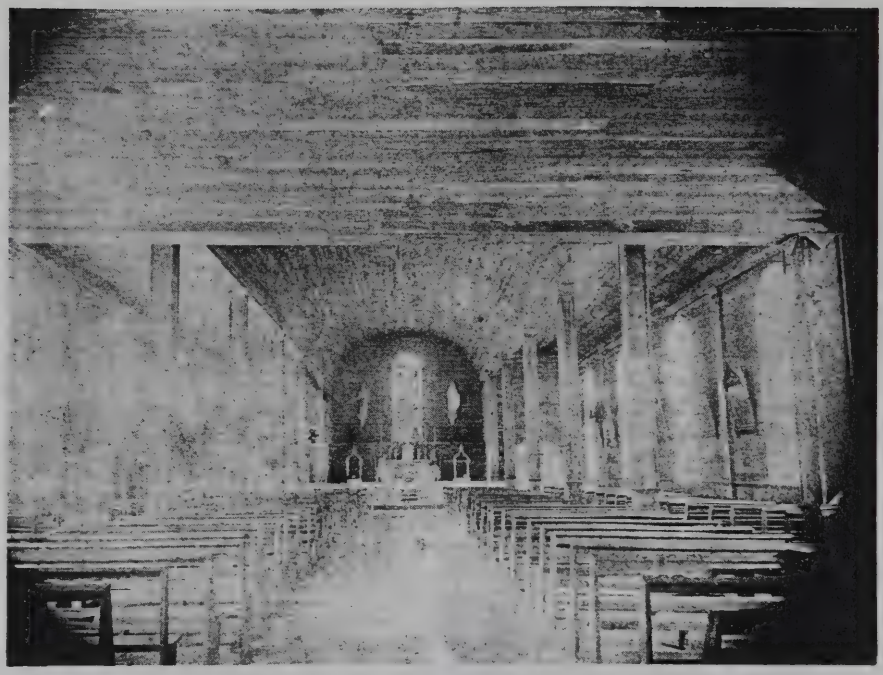
In 1888, Father Eby wrote to the Archbishop: "So far I never took any salary, but spent according to the need of he place for buildings and improvements, also the necessities of life." Then the next year, he told him; "As for money, I certainly have spent a great deal of my own, but without any intention of claiming it back." Such was the generosity and spirit of self-sacrifice of the pastor.

Once the work on the new Church of the Sacred Heart of Mary got under way, in 1884, Father Eby pushed it constantly. The lumber was hauled from the vicinity of Washington, La., by ox-carts to the Plaquemine Brulé site, and this wood was dressed by means of adzes by hand. The system of splicing strips or laminating layers of lumber was unknown, or rather undeveloped, so the pieces for the arches in the nave of the church were cut from solid pieces. Those who had funds gave, and those who had but little generously provided their labor for the new house of worship. It was built on a site southwest of the old chapel of Father Rocoffort and Father Nachon.

The frame structure measured 50 feet in width by a length of 100 feet, providing a seating capacity of 600 or more people, a rather large church for its time and location in an entirely farming community. It is stated that Monsieur Pousson of New Iberia, who designed so many Catholic churches of that period, also made the plans for the Church Point building. A feature of the church there was the odd-shaped base of the high steeple, reminiscent of the bulbous towers of Slav architecture. The church originally was much narrower than it was in recent decades, as it extended only across the pews on each side of the center aisle, and there were no transepts on each side next to the sanctuary. All of these additions were made later.

When in the spring of 1855, the new Church, "l'Eglise du Sacre Coeur de Marie," was just about completed, Father Eby made plans for the dedication, and there was much jubilation. The time was set for a Sunday, not long after Easter. In fact, it was on April 21, 1855, that the imposing new wooden church was formally dedicated. Very Rev. Gilbert Raymond, the Dean, came down from Opelousas with his assistants, and a delegation of Jesuit Fathers came over from Grand Coteau, besides several priests from neighboring parishes. Not the least to be welcomed among the clerical visitors were Father Vialletton, who had relinquished charge of the flock just two years previously; then tireless Father Anthonioz who came up from Rayne for the gala occasion, and of course, unforgettable

The Old Church Without Wings



Interior of Original Church

Father Abbadie, who was serving as assistant at St. Charles of Grand Coteau, and Father John Montillot, who was rector of the college there. It was a moment of glory for energetic, devoted Father Eby, just as it was a gala day for Church Point and its environs for miles around—it was a meeting of the clans such as had not been seen for a long time. "Monsieur Guid" had gone to his reward, and so had the two staunch Daigles who had personally done so much to lay the foundation for just such a thing as this—an adequate, impressive church for the far-flung parish. Monsieur Theodule and Monsieur Joseph "avaient passes par la porte de l'eglise a la porte du ciel", and who will doubt that a grateful God had admitted them to a place with Him? But on hand to share "les habitants du Brulé" was Father Eby's good friend, Jean Barousse, and the heads of so many other prominent families of the prairie.

With the new church completed, Father Eby worked on to pay the debt on the church, and when that was within clearing status, he then gave attention to the building of a rectory. One of the old houses on the property originally bought, was serving as a presbytery—but by grace of the name and that was all. However, Father Eby was not one by any means to waste time and effort on himself or his comforts. In his report for the year 1888, the pastor informed the Archbishop: "Debt, incurred in 1887, April or May, for building the 'pastorage.' Amount due on debt: Balance of $100 on note of $600. Due to Jean Barousse, who will charge no interest, a friend

The Old Presbytery

of the church. I borrowed more, but everything is paid. I bought the ostensorium and a set of black vesments."

This new "pastorage" or "la maison du pretre," was 40 feet by 40 feet, with an eight-foot porch all around, and two rooms upstairs. This structure, according to Monsignor Bienvenu, was of adobe sonstruction. Two of Father Eby's sisters and a nephew (Joseph) came from France and resided with him, buf after 1902, when he was hospitalized, they returned to France.

Pere Eby was an energetic man, at home in the saddle as he was in the pulpit. And he really loved beautiful horses. The sight of their pastor on horseback cutting across the prairie and down some coulée was as familiar to them as the priest in vestments having "un service a domicile pour le vieux Clovis et sa vielle, Grandmere Comeau." But he was also brusque and quite sharp in his comments when the occasion demanded, and occasions certainly were not lacking — "des marriages de manche a balai" that he couldn't get straightened out, shooting affrays that sometimes rent old families apart and weighed heavily on the good priest's heart, the men—ever so many—who stayed around the horses and the ox carts and buggies in front of the church or by the stores instead of coming in for Mass, men—ever so many of them—who never came to the Holy Table. Old views and habits of hard pioneering days were tough to curb, much less eradicate.

On this last point, Pere Eby drove incessantly. In his first full year there, he could report only "about 1600" Holy Communions, but by dint of patience and thundering the Gospel teachings of Our Lord and condemning those who in effect told Christ: "Je te veux pas chez moi, non," that situation began to improve. By 1888, there were 2000 who received Holy Communion out of a parochial popu-

lation of more than 3000, but it still meant more than one-third of the parish who made no Easter duties. The next year saw 2844 at the Holy Table, and by 1890, the number of communicants surpassed the parish population—3720 Holy Communions. Sermons, instructions and regular missions all gradually had their effect, but it was a slow process and Father Eby pinned hopes to a great extent on the catechism classes for First Communion. There was something else on which the good priest leaned, and that was the interression of the Blessed Virgin Mary, to obtain the graces from God necessary to move the hearts of his people.

When he sent his report to the Archbishop in January, 1899, he had left the section for the listing of parish societies blank, but he added this note: "I think I must mention the Society of the Holy Rosary, but it is commenced only since the first of January of this year (1889). I have 300 members." This devotion of the Rosary was continuously stressed by Father Eby, and it spread far and wide, finding ready favor in almost every family so that before long few indeed were those families where someone didn't make "les dizaines du chapelet." There were many who were "des Catholiques a gros grains," as pastors of South Louisiana so often fulminated in scolding the wayward, but even among them many were faithful to their beads, at least. What graces Our Lady obtained for these, Judgment Day will reveal! The Rosary society continued down the years, and the devotion remained rooted solid in the parish, what with Pere Eby's tireless promotion.

One other society functioned in the parish—the Society of St. Joseph for the Colored. This group is first mentioned in 1889, and it continued to Father Roger's time, although every once in a while, notations forecast its apparent extinction or probable dissolution. The pastor devoted attention to the Colored in the parish, and had regular catechism classes for them for First Communion and Confirmation. In 1888, he wrote: "I think that Colored are in my congregation about a third or a little below, of the whites." His work among the Negroes is reflected in the baptismal and other parish statistics. Baptism of Colored persons had declined sharply after Emancipation, but by dint of strenuous efforts, the Jesuit Fathers increased the number of Baptisms. This work was continued by Father Eby. In 1888, he recorded 75 Negro Baptisms, and 73 in 1892, besides six adults. During the rest of his pastorate the number continued to range in the 50s and 60s.

Baptisms of white children also increased steadily. By 1890, Father Eby reported 187 infants and two adults. In 1896, the number had gone up to 223 infants and two adults. A record high was reached in 1899, when there were 246 Baptisms. During the last year of Father Eby's administration, 1902, 233 infant Baptisms were registered and six adults.

The number of marriages fluctuated widely—from 14 in 1884, Father Eby's first full year in the parish, up to 68 in 1896 and the same number in 1901. Mixed marriages were few—during his pastorate, there were only seven.

Father Eby succeeded gradually in getting parishioners to use the parish cemetery, consecrated ground, for the burial of their dead. In 1888, he recorded only 20 burials, but there were 49 in 1892, and 66 in 1901.

Church Point was in a remote section of the Archdiocese of New Orleans as it was regarded some 70 years ago, besides being off the main railroad lines and principal roads. The Archbishops came for Confirmation three or four years apart, so that sometimes the Confirmations were exceptionally large. Archbishop Janssens made his first visit to Church Point in 1890, and Father Eby presented a class of 333, well prepared by the pastor and the "montreurs et montreuses de catechisme." Archbishop Janssens returned in 1892, and Confirmed 199. His last visit to the Church of the Sacred Heart of Mary was in 1895, when he administered Confirmation to 390 persons. But the last Confirmation under direction of Father Eby was in 1899, when Auxiliary Bishop Gustave Rouxel Confirmed a record class of 554.

The First Communion for the parish and Confirmation were impresive occasions, and Father Eby made them so in every possible way. He usually invited a priest from the outside to conduct the retreat—and what an ordeal that was, including the tension from those endless reviews—"repasser le catechisme!" For the 1890 Confirmation, Father Silvanus, O.S.B., from St. Leo's Church at Robert's Cove, Rayne, assisted the pastor. Father Anthonioz came over from Rayne for the occasion, and two days later (May 10, 1890) Father Eby went to Rayne for Confirmation there for 340 persons.

However, what weighed most heavily on Father Eby's priestly soul was the lack of zeal in the reception of the Sacraments among the parishioners, and he continually drove home the need for greater love for Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. In 1891, the number of persons receiving declined to 3323. and in 1892 to 3294, but the following year there was an increase to 3535. The year 1894 saw another decline to 3247. Then, from that time on, the number increased steadily, with a set-back now and then. In 1896, the number of communicants reached a high of 4130. The pastor had much consolation when he saw 4360 of his flock receiving Holy Communion in 1898, and even more so the next year, when there were 4618—a number that was not surpassed until 1905. However, during the last three years of his administration, sickness robbed the pastor of his customary energy and drive, and the number of communicants dropped down to 4003 in 1900, to 3781 in 1901, and to 3500 in 1902.

Another source of anxiety for Pere Eby was the financing of the parish. The Church of the Sacred Heart of Mary was a parish church for an essentially agricultural section, so that the wherewithal to live of the people and the revenues of the parish depended upon the crops. Farmers mostly turned away from sugar cane and took to cotton. But there were floods and boll weevils to face. The farmer's lot was the pastor's lot too. The records of the parish revenues provide a good graph of the vicissitudes of the revenues

of the parishioners, but particularly the pew rental. Church Point followed the practice of almost all communities and parishes of South Louisiana at the time for basic revenues—namely, rental of church pews and their assignment to parishioners at auction. Since the farmers and merchants who were better off, were the usual pew renters, one can sense economic conditions from the revenues obtained at the annual pew auction.

For example, in 1888, the pews brought $650, and the collections in the church on Sundays and days of obligation totalled the grand sum of $18. Total revenues for the year 1888 amounted to $1343. The Christmas and Easter collections that year combined, amounted to a grand total of $6. No wonder self-sacrificing Pere Eby wrote to the Archbishop: "So far I never took any salary!"

The year 1889 showed some improvement—revenues amounted to $1435.65, because pew rental went up to $780, but the plate collections went down to $15.25 for the whole year. Then expenses that year exceeded the revenues; disbursements amounted to $1526.15. Listed among expenses was the salary for the organist, also "improvements—lightning rods, cost $55, and a new little building to use as a stable and a shed for washing." That year, good Father Eby was surprised by a Christmas collection of $13.50! Besides, the seminary collection at Easter went up to $11.25! Under the heading of debt, the pastor wrote: "Same debt as last year — $100, due Monsieur Barousse, who promises not to charge any interest."

A movement was put on foot in 1889 to have a mission chapel built in one of the remote sections of the extensive parish, and the pastor wrote to the Archbishop early in 1890: "I have spoken to certain parties of establishing a chapel or station in their midst for services and administration of the Sacraments during the week. Land would be given willingly and contributions raised if it has the sanction of the authority." Nothing further has been found on the project. However, Pere Eby was far from neglecting his flock who lived far out on the prairie and along the many bayous of the area. He was here, there and everywhere on horseback. Many times, when a call came for the village doctor, he relayed the message to the pastor, and when folks in the town and around Clarke's Store heard the clatter of horses' hooves down the street towards the country road, they said: "Ah, voila le docteur et le cure a faire la Chasse aux malades!" And sure enough, there went pastor and doctor at a great gallop—one bent on healing a soul, the other, healing a body.

The pew auction in 1890 went up to a new record—$886.25! But in 1892, for the first time, the pews brought $1000! This amount was repeated in 1893, but a new record was set in 1896, when the auction resulted in revenues of $1069. The concept of giving to the church and supporting the pastor under the law of the Church took hold very slowly. As was very common in South Louisiana, many held to the fantastic idea that the Church was rich and that parish revenues went into the pastor's pocket, despite the exasperation of

Mr. Barousse and other family leaders, such as Daigle, Lebleu, Guidry, David and others who tried to make them understand that all the money available to spend was what parishioners contributed, and that went into parish funds—and nowhere else. But many, just the same, gave nothing or the customary nickel that loomed huge—to them!

Father Eby, in January, 1889, had told Archbishop Janssens, " I have no school, I work to have one." It was his idea for years, since his advent to the parish, to have a Catholic school; his interest in the spiritual welfare of the little ones of his flock was deep. After the erection of the new church, the old chapel was preserved, as the pastor figured that it could be used advantageously. But this meant repairs, and repairs meant money. With the church debt cleared, and the rectory built, then the note to Jean Barousse paid, Father Eby turned his thoughts to his proposed school. True, revenues went up in 1890—up to $1653.85. Even the collections in church increased—to $24.85. But the Christmas collection had gone to a new low—$3.20. The Indian and Negro Missions collection netted the magnificent sum of $1! But the Archbishop had directed that the pastor take the salary due him for a decent upkeep, not only at Church Point, but in every parish. It was the duty of the parishioners to support their pastor.

This gave Father Eby an opportunity. He went ahead with the school. Some of his own salary went into that. The school opened in 1891, with 31 boys and 28 girls. Two lay teachers were employed. The church needed some repairs, and the pastor had to spend $1545 for this, and he could expend only $75 on the school building. Revenues that year totalled $1867.15, but the expenses went up to $1946.17, and in 1892 the receipts amounted to $1870.35 but expenditures increased to $2357.55. The latter amount was due in part to cost for the building of a stable and an addition to the school, costing $450. In addition, Father Eby reported, apologetically, "for the teacher's salary, I have been obliged to spend $139. The staff had been reduced to one teacher—enrollment in 1892 was 27 boys and 21 girls. Probably on account of the expenses involved, Father Eby was obliged to discontinue the school after 1894, when there were 31 boys and 20 girls.

If parish revenues in general improved, the regular collections did not—they totalled $24.85 in 1890, and the Christmas collection that year reached the all-time low of $3.20! The 1892 plate contributions amounted to $16.20, and in 1896, only $19.95. The report for 1899 showed total revenues of $1837.95, and expenses of $1539.35. Despite the limited resources at his command, Father Eby did wonders. He was a prudent administrator, carefully avoiding any debts. He installed a new organ in the church in 1895, repaired the fences, and spent $15 for paper flowers (the fashion at the time) for the decoration of the altars—the pride of the ladies of the altar society.

In common with all the parishes of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, Church Point was assessed its pro rata by Archbishop

New Paper Flowers For The Main Altar
Father Eby and Sisters Christine and Clarisse and his Cousin Joseph Look on

Chapelle for the final extinction of the diocesan debt, and Father Eby carefully put away whatever surplus he had towards paying this requirement. By January of 1899, he said: "The parish had banked $1218.22, and with approval of the Archbishop I sent to the Archbishopric $1063, our complete pro rata of the diocesan debt. Besides, I spent for urgent repairs and improvements to the church $106.75, leaving banked $48.67, which with the balance of this year, makes a total of $197.77."

The need of a school for the children still worried the devoted pastor, and in a letter to Monseigneur Chapelle in 1899, he explained conditions at Church Point: "The church is not painted inside. We need a new Way of the Cross, but that is not pressing. I was also to give attention to the question of the school, but for that, I think I'll have to be patient for some time yet, until the horizon clears. That is the thorniest of all questions. While awaiting better conditions, the public school is lodged in our old church. The parish is too poor, the population too scattered, politics too conniving, to give us a frankly real Catholic school."

In April of that year, the Hope Hook and Ladder Co. No. 1 of Church Point asked permission of the pastor to establish its firehouse on a lot belonging to the parish church, corner of Main and Church Streets. However, Father Eby felt that the Archbishop should decide. The petition was headed by H. J. David, president of the Hook and Ladder and Mayor of Church Point, and signed also by these officers: Clement C. Chandezon, foreman; Joseph Bourgue, Jr., and Edmond Deville, assistant foremen; Edward Daigle, treasurer, and Laurent Barousse, secretary.

Father Eby, with whatever personal funds he could put aside, bought up some real estate in the town of Church Point at the time when property was extremely cheap. This land he intended for the parish church and a convent school—the latter project always bearing on his mind.

It is interesting to note that the oak trees on the church property were brought as small trees by Father Eby from the lands of William Lam Briscoe, the father of Joe Briscoe. The pine trees were brought by Fernest Daigle from Prairie Hayes, when they were about 18 inches high, during the fall of 1884, while the new church was being built. Pecans taken from Mr. Briscoe's trees were planted by Father Eby and transplanted into the Pecan Grove.

One important event in the administration of the first pastor was the legal incorporation of the church parish. Archbishop Janssens, upon advice of leading attorneys, arranged for the formation of a separate corporation for each church parish in the archdiocese, and all property of that parish registered in its own name. This incorporation was effected by an act of 1894, with the following legal title given to the parish: Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Mary Roman Catholic Church. A notarial act of May 22, 1896, legally transferred from the name of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, all parochial property to the new corporation.

Around 1900, Father Eby began to ail and to fret, but he continued his endless work. In April, 1902, the devoted priest suffered a serious nervous breakdown, and it was necessary to remove him to DePaul Sanitarium at New Orleans. The sturdy physical constitution that he possessed was revealed by the fact that he lived to be 82 years old, and died January 26, 1938, or 36 years after he was obliged to surrender the pastorate at Church Point.

Pere Eby merits to be remembered gratefully by the congregation of old Plaquemine Brulé, because it was due to his energy and self-sacrifice that the parish was organized, a new parish church was erected, a presbytery built the Faith inculcated in so many families, devotion to Our Lady was spread, and so many families were brought closer to the Church and to the Sacraments. The work in the parish was not easy. Much rugged individualism prevailed, likewise abuses and hard ways, besides religious indifference, particularly among men. The marvel of his administration lies in his patience, his persistence and his courage to carry on for so many years, despite so many difficulties and obstacles, conditions that would have made many another person less stout-hearted and less blessed with indomitable faith to abandon the prairie and the bayous. But devoted Father Eby carried on until the task and the surrounding conditions overtook him and broke him.

CANON ROGER BECOMES PASTOR

WHEN Father Eby left Church Point, Rev. Auguste F. Roger was called to assume the pastorate at the Church of the Sacred Heart of Mary, in April, 1902, being then only 28 years old. The new pastor was a native of LaBoussac, Brittany, France, born January 21, 1874. He was ordained to the priesthood at the age of 22 — two years before the canonical age. The first six years of his ministry were exercised in parishes on Bayou Lafourche as an assistant, until his assignment to Church Point.

Father Roger was a priest full of energy and zeal, and an excellent disciplinarian, possessed of considerable determination. Because of the need for much travelling around the extensive parochial territory, he was obliged to maintain a stable. This consisted of four beautiful horses, one pair was white, and for these animals he had much admiration. However, the pastor lived in an era of changes and the great gain in popularity of the Model-T Ford, but particularly its tremendous convenience and its possibilities of permitting him to cover so much ground so much faster in the parish, eventually won him over to the automobile. This aroused him, as it did to many community and civil parish leaders, to a realization of abominable condition of public roads and made of him a great promoter of gravel roads for Acadia Parish.

The pastorate of Father Eby had been one of organization and establishment. Father Roger's administration was one of development, improvement and spiritual progress, bringing with them the rise of parish societies. When the new pastor came on April, 1902, he found three organizations in the parish—Society of the Rosary, Ladies' Altar Society and the St. Joseph Society for the Colored. The Catholic Knights of America had also established a branch in Church Point. He promptly promoted these existing organizations,

and soon afterwards formed the Children of Mary. As early as 1907, men of the parish enrolled in the Knights of Columbus, but it was not until 1923 that a separate Council was established at Church Point. In 1910, the Children of Mary counted 35 members and the Altar Society had 75 on its roster. The Catholic Daughters of America formed a court in 1924 with 40 members.

Shortly after his arrival, Father Roger made a study of the existing parish plant and noted the many repairs and improvements that were needed. To these he gave his energetic attention. Early in 1904, he undertook the enlargement of the church. Two transepts or wings were added to each side of the sanctuary, and behind it a 10-foot by 20-foot sacristy was built. Each of the side wings

The Very Rev. A. F. Canon Roger

measured 32 feet wide by 42 feet long, and together they provided 400 additional seats in the church. Father Roger arranged for the use of the wing on the Epistle side by the Negroes of the congregation. The pews for the two side chapels cost $321.75, and the labor for the added sections, lumber, lightning rods and piping called for an additional expense of $2524. In 1905, the entire inside of the church was painted—for the first time; This enlargement increased the seating capacity of the church to 1150. The altars were moved against the back wall, thus providing a spacious sanctuary as it has been up to now.

The Old Church with Wings and Insert of Father Roger

The pastor then made improvements to the presbytery. He added the kitchen an annex for visiting priests, and the Bishop's room. He also installed new pews in the church in 1907, and bought sorely needed new vestments.

The church suffered seriously from the great hurricane of 1909, which ravaged South Louisiana and caused untold damage to scores of churches. The force of the wind pushed the church over, causing it to lean badly towards the cemetery or Gospel side, and took away much of the roof. Demolishing the building and erecting a new church would have entailed a large sum, which the pastor knew the congregation could not afford. Thereupon, he added a wing on each side of the church to buttress it and straighten it out, but this was not done completely, so that up to the present, the church coninued to lean to some extent towards the cemetery. Those longitudinal wings measured 16 feet in width and 78 feet in length on each side. This gave the church a width of 84 feet. This enlargement then gave the church a total seating capacity of 1450, making it the largest wooden church in Louisiana. Added at the same time were the two small spires, each with a bulbous base, similar to that of the central steeple. The new galvanized iron roof on the church cost $955.15.

These side additions to the church were necessary. Father Roger's energetic and forceful efforts were bearing fruit, and at-

The Church with Wing and Sides Added

Interior of Enlaged and Painted Church

tendance at services was steadily increasing. Every two years, he had a mission for the congregation, and soon the church was too small for the throngs that came, as was the case at the low Mass in summer, and the High Mass in winter.

One of the notable missions was the one of 1918, conducted by two widely known Jesuit Fathers, Father Biever and Father Diebold. The number of Communions that year passed the 15,000 mark. In his reminiscences Father Biever, who had taught catechism as a novice in 1876, in the pioneer chapel of Plaquemine Brulé, wrote: "In my opening sermon, I alluded to my previous visit in May, 1876. Then the few Catholic families who lived in the neighborhood, came to church in big country wagons, pulled by sturdy mules or oxen. Behold, I said, the wonderful transformation that has taken place! Whilst I was addressing the vast audience that crowded in and around the large church, Canon A. F. Roger, rector of the church, assisted by some parishioners, counted the buggies and the autos that had brought to the opening of this historic mission fully 2000 persons. Their report was almost incredible and showed 600 buggies and 200 autos!"

For each mission, Father Roger obtained missionaries from reigious orders, the most outstanding priests that he could get. This he did also for Lent and for the retreats for First Communion. The 1913 mission was given by Benedictine Fathers from California.

For the 1903 Holy Week, the congregation had an opportunity to hear the famous Jesuit orator, Father de la Moriniere.

Father Roger was quite an eloquent orator himself, and he diligently prepared his sermons, the subjects of each of which for Sundays, he inscribed in the announcement book. All of his work, missions, instructions, catechism classes, and his incessant thundering and fulminations on fidelity to the commandments of God and the laws of the Church, gradually bore fruit.

When he came in 1902, the pastor noted 3500 Communions in the year for a population of 3000. But Pere Roger soon found that the population was nothing short of 5000. Out of these, in 1903, he had 4104 communicants. He encountered the same indifference about reception of the Sacraments among many men of the parish as was the case in so many other South Louisiana parishes. By 1908, the population of the Church parish had increased to 6000, but Communions numbered only 5410, and the number continued under 6000 through 1913, in a congregation of 6000. But in 1914, the number went up to 9580, and from that time, the increase continued steadily. Establishment of the parochial school in 1914 was one of the reasons—good example.

The year of the great mission of Father Biever (1918), there were 15,000 Communions. The number reached a peak during Father Roger's pastorate in 1924, when he reported 18,000 receiving Holy Communion during the year; the parish then counted 7000 people.

The number of Baptisms kept pace with the population increase, and all through Father Roger's pastorate kept within 230 and 290 per year. The largest number was in 1919, when Baptisms for the year totalled 294. The number of marriages also increased and kept at the higher level, with 98 the highest number in 1925. Mixed marriages were few, seldom more than one in a year. The largest number was three in 1919. Infant mortality continued high, and it was only in 1928, the year of Father Roger's death, that deaths among adults exceeded infant deaths and burials—46 adults and 31 children.

Father Roger strove diligently to have his parishioners receive Confirmation. The old system continued of the Archbishop or his Auxiliary for visitation only every three or four years. Sometimes the Confirmation classes were of enormous numbers. By 1903, there had been no Confirmation since 1899, four years, so the pastor arranged for Bishop Rouxel, Auxiliary Bishop of New Orleans, to come to Church Point. For weeks in advance, Father Roger in the pulpit stressed the coming visit and the importance of all who had not been Confirmed to come on this occasion. They did—the class numbered 646, from 12 years old to the 30s and 40s, white and Colored. Homer Barousse and Albert Brault were the sponsors for the boys, and Mesdames Ernest Daigle and Joseph Bourgue, for the girls. Six priests from neighboring parishes were present, besides the Dean of Opelousas, Very Rev. Father Engberink.

Archbishop Chapelle, while on his famous Confirmation tour of 1905 to 44 parishes of South Louisiana, visited Church Point and Confirmed a class of 355 persons, in the presence of Father Roger and 11 visiting priests. The retreat was preached by Jesuit Fathers from Grand Coteau. Archbishop Blenk came on his first visit on August 29, 1908, and great preparations were made to welcome him with an escort of horsemen and volleys of rifles, besides firing of canon. The class included 411 persons, and the following parishioners served as sponsors: Thelesmar Guidry and Agedee Jaquenault for the boys, and Mesdames Albert Breaux and Leonard Franques for the girls.

In 1914, Bishop Laval, Auxiliary of New Orleans, gave Confirmation in the Church of the Sacred Heart of Mary to the largest class in the parish to that time—712. Laurent Barousse and J. D. Murrell were the boys' sponsors, and Mrs. Edward Daigle and Mrs. John Horecky for the girls. However, when Monseigneur Laval returned in 1917 for Confirmation, all records in parish history were shattered—834 persons received Confirmation! The sponsors for this historic occasion were Thelismar Guidry and Valerie Bourque for the boys, and Mrs. Joseph Bourque and Mrs. Albert Breaux for the girls.

In 1918, an important change occurred in the Church in Southwest Louisiana. The whole area from the Atchafalaya River to the Sabine and from Avoyelles Parish to the Gulf of Mexico, was erected into the new Diocese of Lafayette, the first Bishop, His Excellency, Most Rev. Jules B. Jeanmard, made his first formal visitation and gave Confirmation at Church Point for the first time on October 20, 1920, to a class of 668!

The Convent

One of the outstanding projects of Father Roger's administration was the establishment of a parochial school. This had been Father Eby's dream, as we noted, and it was no less an impelling desire of his successor. He knew of the financial difficulties of his flock, so he generously helped bring the school to realization with his own personal funds. Quotations from his letter to the late Monsignor Gassler, his close friend, dated March 4, 1914, will disclose some of the details about the school he built at Church Point:

"I am sending to you by registered mail, the plan of the school . . . I hope to begin building at Church Point within a few weeks. The plan (for the school) was made by Mr. McNeil of Rayne. He built 26 churches and several Catholic schools. He is a good Catholic. The school will cost about $7000 all furnished, maybe a little less. I have on hand more than $5000 and the rest will be a present of Father Roger to the Catholic school of Church Point, so that the Sisters can start their school in September in a school completely furnished and paid. The Lumber Yard of Church Point, all of whose members are Catholic, not only are helping me with their private contributions, but also furnish me all the material at cost, rendering me an immense service, and permitting me to dedicate to the furnishings of the school the money which otherwise I would have had to pay on construction . . . "

"As I told you yesterday, I hope to have the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. I had several occasions on which to admire their devotedness and their kindness, and I am persuaded by the good will of my parishioners, and of my own, they will do an immense good here."

"I thought that the convent would climax my efforts at Church Point, but I'll have to enlarge my church, which despite two Masses and 1100 seats, is much too small."

Seven days later, he wrote again to Monsignor Gassler and told him he had interviewed the Sisters and had arranged for five Sisters of the Immaculate Conception to staff the new school. The plan of the convent, he explained was the same as the one at Rayne, but larger. "My intention," he went on, "is to build afterwards a hall in the style of the old church at Rayne, which will serve as an exhibition hall and for school rooms for the boys." He then referred to the loyal support of the Daigle Family, and the good will of the other parishioners. "Needless to say," he explained, "the heaviest of the expenses will fall upon me, but I won't have a cent of debt . . . With a few friends, we'll see to the lighting, heat and insurance. I have also to find ways and means to enlarge the church and the rectory . . . We had almost seven years without crops, because of the boll weevil. I can't impose a heavy burden on people already so tried."

Despite Father Roger's jubilation, Archbishop Blenk did not approve the plans as originally drafted for the convent. There was no light in the classrooms, and there were other defects in planning. "The Rayne convent," Monsignor Gassler reminded Father Roger,

"was built 25 years ago. Your school should be along more modern lines." The faults were corrected, and approval was finally given. Monsignor Gassler made final, decisive arrangements with the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. Furnishings for the Sisters arrived early in August, and the desks came the ensuing week.

The school opened with 140 pupils, and Father Roger stated he expected enrollment to rise to 200. He was delighted with the Sisters and so were the parishioners. The school was so successful, that he wrote: "I have regained 10 years." Such was the devotion and enthusiasm of this good pastor. By 1916, there were six Sisters and 232 pupils. But after the great disastrous flood of 1927, the number declined to 130 and to 120 in 1929. Two superiors were in charge of the convent over a period of 25 years—Mother Bernadette served from September, 1914, to June, 1932, and Sister Margaret Mary, 1932-1940. The first graduation exercises of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School took place on June 20, 1917, with five graduates, and the ceremonies at the Bijou Theater.

The school was the pride and joy of the zealous pastor, and catechetical work was one of his great activities. Before First Communion, there were two important functions—"repasser le catechisme et la retraite." Both of them were emphasized from the pulpit by Father Roger, especially just before Confirmation. For the retreats, neighboring pastors or Jesuits from Grand Coteau came. On several occasions, he had Father Livoreil of Leonville.

When World War I broke out in 1917, Father Roger turned his oratorical ability to arouse his flock to their duties in behalf of their country, as announcement books reveal. One of his sermons on the subject was delivered at the very beginning of the war, in April, 1917—"War—America Awakening and Seeing Our Weakness." He supported the Red Cross and other war activities, urging participation of his flock in work to help the nation. Church Point, as always, gave its quota of men to the armed forces, as the many stars in the service flag testified.

Old customs persisted and many obstacles confronted Father Roger in his work. For example, the old announcement books of the pastor contain in August, 1902, the year he came, a reminder for him to speak about "cracher dans l'eglise." This was an abuse that had become so rooted in the congregation that Father Eby had been obliged to install cuspidors in the church. Father Roger thundered against this, but the custom continued, and it was only in Monsignor Bienvenu's time that the last of the offensive spittoons were removed from the church. Often the announcement books reveal requests for the prayers of the congregation for the crops or for rain.

Father Roger conducted regularly devotions to the Blessed Mother during the month of May, and the rosary during October. He developed and maintained quite a choir, and conducted a collection among parishioners for a new organ which was installed not long after he became pastor.

Finances of the parish were always a matter of anxiety for Father Roger, because he was a prudent administrator and he abhorred debts. He always followed a policy of pay-as-you go in all parish improvements, but by this method—whatever the parishioners were unable to contribute to cover expenses, the self-sacrificing pastor paid out of his own personal funds. In his report for 1911, Father Roger noted: "All improvements either on the church or on the rectory, have been paid by the pastor himself, from 1902 to January, 1912." He covered the deficits as they occurred.

Church point parish was dependent at the time even more than now, more or less on one crop, and not merely prosperity, but the wherewithal of living depended on the annual crop. Finances of the parish church fluctuated accordingly. Total revenues, for example, for 1903, Father Roger's first full year, amounted to $2355.70, including $1090 from the auction of pews. The ordinary collections in church for the year totalled $46, the Easter collection, $5.25 and the Christmas collection, $5.

However, Father Roger succeeded in arousing negligent parishioners to a sense of obligation to contribute to the support of their parish church and finances gradually improved. By 1904, the annual revenues went up to $4555.15, with the pews bringing in $2280. In some years, however, finances were low. The year 1923 saw the revenues go up to $6504.64—the highest to that time in the annals of the parish, and in 1927, the year before Father Roger died, the parish funds totalled $6794.25.

In November, 1920, the Church of the Sacred Heart of Mary of Church Point was given its first assistant. This was Rev. A. Audoye, a French priest who suffered from shell-shock from World War I. He helped out considerably in the multitude of duties that constantly increased in the growing parish. He served at Church Point until June, 1930, when he became chaplain for the Christian Brothers at Lafayette, La. Rev. Armand Cyr was the next assistant, serving from September 1930, to June, 1932.

Another improvement to the parish plant by Father Roger was the construction in 1924 of a parish hall, as he had visioned in 1914, when he put up the school. This structure, 40 by 120 feet, was erected where the Community Center now stands. It contained a sizeable auditorium and stage. Monsignor Bienvenu moved this building in 1938 next to the convent, where it now stands, with two large classrooms in it.

Father Roger could have built a spacious brick church during the prosperous years of his administration, but he preferred to give the parish the much needed parochial school. Another of his benefits to the church was statuary—in 1914 alreaady, the church had 12 statues. At the beginning of this year, the parish church had 22 statues, and these have been deftly employed in the new church. Father Roger also installed windows and new pews, and cement walks around the church and rectory.

It was not surprising that recognition should be given to this energetic pastor for his many achievements in Church Point parish. His Excellency, Bishop Jeanmard in 1921, appointed him an Honorary Canon of the Lafayette Cathedral, at the time that Father Roger celebrated his silver jubilee as a priest. He was also appointed Diocesan Consultor.

Canon Roger was quite sick during the last few years that he was stationed at Church Point, suffering from anemia. He was taken to Hotel Dieu at New Orleans, but he continued to decline and the end came on November 19, 1928. He had done much for Sacred Heart of Mary Church, and his beneficient influence over the parish and his labors remain to this day. The people of Church Point remember him gratefully.

PERE VIEL AT CHURCH POINT

HIS Excellency, Bishop Jeanmard, transferred Rev. Auguste Viel from the pastorate at Erath to the pastorate of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Mary at Church Point to succeed Canon Roger, January 15, 1929. He became the third diocesan priest to serve as pastor at old Plaquemine Brulé since formal erection of the parish in 1883.

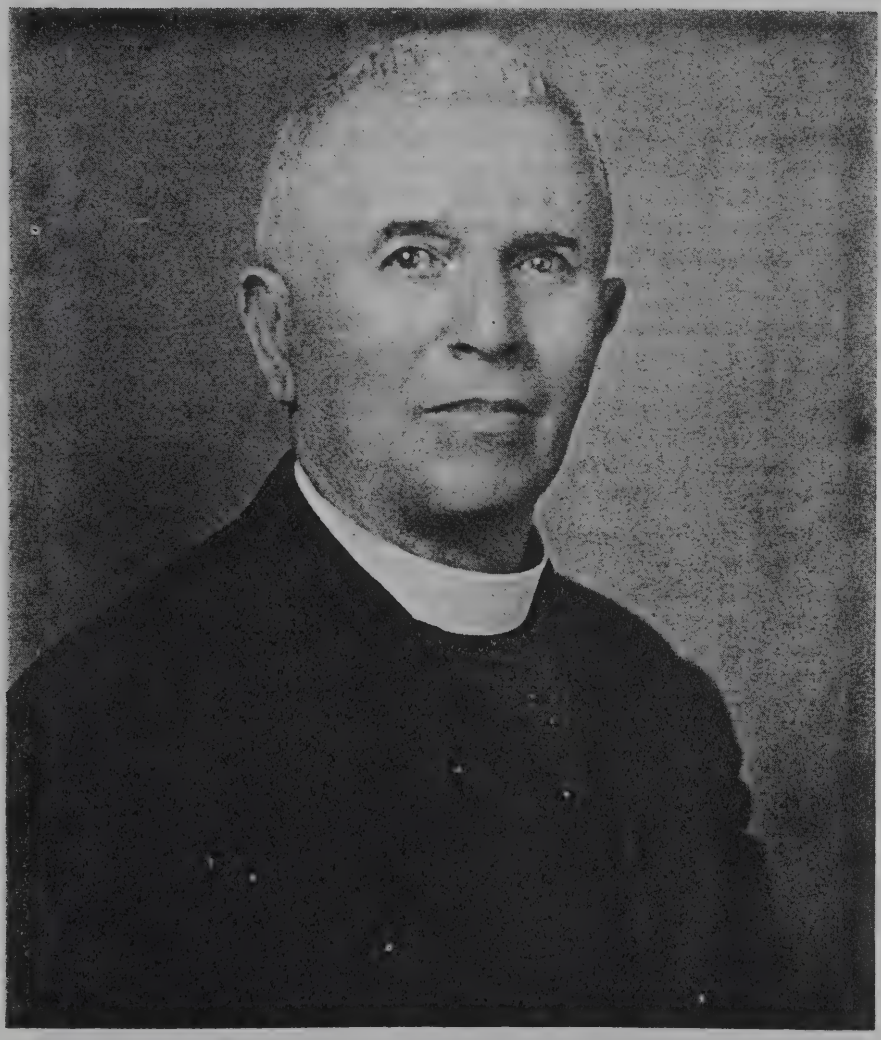
Father Viel was born at La Guerche, Brittany, France, November 29, 1864. He joined the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, referred to as the Eudist Fathers in 1877, and upon completion of his studies was ordained a priest on May 26, 1888, at the Cathedral of Rennes in Brittany by Cardinal Place. He was assigned to teach at the Seminary at Cartagena in Colombia, South America in 1889, and continued in that work for four years. But he developed yellow fever in 1892, and was left for dead in February of that year. However, he survived and in 1893, was sent back to France for his health. While at Cartagena, Father Viel offered Mass every Sunday in the private chapel of President Rafel Nunez.

Back in his native land, he taught history at Besancon, Redon, Rennes and Poitiers until 1904, when the religious congregations were expelled from France. After teaching for a time as a lay professor, he came to the United States, joining the Archdiocese of New Orleans. He served as assistant to the late Rt. Rev. Msgr. J. M. Langlois, when the latter was pastor at Breaux Bridge, then became pastor at Buras, La., July, 1908, to November, 1913. His next post was pastor of the newly formed parish of Mamou, a mission of Ville Platte, and built a presbytery there. In 1928, he was sent to Erath as pastor, and there also he built a new rectory. From there he came to Church Point in 1929.

Father Viel was a stern man, strict with himself and with his parishioners. He had great devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and developed the First Friday devotions in Church Point while he served there for seven and one-half years.

His pastorate was cast mostly during the period of the great nationwide depression, which started in 1929, the year that he was installed as pastor. Hence, there was not much that Pere Viel could do in the way of physical improvement of the parish plant. However, he was able to add porches on each side of the school, and reroof the convent with asbestos shingles. He also made some rearrangements in the rectory after Father Audoye left in 1930.

Despite the depression, the parish finances held up fairly well, indicating the spirit of sacrifice that had been engendered among parishioners. Father Viel undertook the collection of funds for the establishment of a burse to educate a seminarian from the parish of Church Point. The burse amounted to $5000.



The Very Rev. A. Canon Viel

Both the pastor and the people realized that the parish church had seen its best days, and that there was need for a new church, especially since the storm. Pere Viel inaugurated a system of yellow envelopes for the new church building fund, and by the time the pastor was transferred in 1936, this fund had grown to $3580.

New Mass vestments, copes, candelabras for the altar and linens were bought by him, and buildings of the parish plant were kept in repair.

No new societies were organized, but the pastor maintained interest in those already functioning—the Altar Society, the League of the Sacred Heart, Mothers' Club and the Children of Mary, likewise the Knights of Columbus Council.

The parish population for this period, 1929-1936, fluctuated between 5000 and 6000. The number of Holy Communions in 1929 went down to 12,000 during his first year's pastorate, but the number increased to 20,000 in 1933 and held at that level through 1935.

However, the school enrollment, which had made a sharp drop in 1925, declined to 120 pupils in 1929, and remained around 135 during the rest of Pere Viel's administration. The number of Sisters of the Immaculate Conception was reduced to five and a staff of that number was maintained until Monsignor Bienvenu came.

The total revenues for the parish in 1929 amounted to $8468.71, but this went down to $7702.59 for 1932. Three years later, there was improvement in general economic conditions, and this was reflected in receipts for the parish, which increased to $10,643.71. Included were the funds obtained through entertainments and the bazaar and the yellow envelopes, amounting to $3688.25. In 1931, the Mothers' Club made a $300 donation to the parish.

After Father Armand Cyr was transferred as parish assistant in June, 1932, Father Viel had no assistant until September, 1932, when Rev. Olan A. Broussard was assigned to that post at Church Point. He remained there until March, 1933, when Rev. Joseph A. Lafleur came in March, 1933, but his stay was brief, as in July of that year, he was changed, and Rev. Ernest Moreau was sent to Church Point in September, 1933. He remained at the Church of the Sacred Heart of Mary during the rest of Pere Viel's pastorate and into the administration of Monsignor Bienvenu.

Father Viel visited all sections of the extensive parish territory. The boundaries then were those of Lawtell and Opelousas on the north, Grand Coteau on the east, Coulée Croche and Marais Bouleur on the south, and Rayne and Mowata to the west. This was later changed to Eunice and Mowata on the west, and Rayne on the south. He started to "say Mass sometimes at Mr. Terville Guidry's house," as he reported in 1935, but already in 1934, he was having catechism there, also Mass and First Communion classes.

Pere Viel was appointed pastor of Carencro in June, 1936. His pastorate extended over a period of poor economic conditions, hence

his administration was unable to offer much in the way of physical improvements to the parish plant. However, he maintained the spirit of zeal and piety, which his predecessors had developed, and which he passed on to his successor, Monsignor Bienvenu.

When Father Viel celebrated the golden jubilee of his ordination to the priesthood on November 30, 1938, and at the same time, his 75th birthday, His Excellency, Bishop Jeanmard, conferred upon him the title of Honorary Canon of the Lafayette Cathedral.

With the assumption of the pastorate at the Church Point parish church by Monsignor Bienvenu in June, 1936, a new era opened up for the old Plaquemine Brulé mission, which had come to the full stature of a church parish in 1883. Better economic conditions, and the remarkable spirit of good will and co-operation by the large congregation, together with the energetic devoted and self-sacrificing efforts of the new pastor, brought the Parish of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart into its own, to days of glory, to inspiring spiritual progress, and to the realization of a dream of generations—a spacious, adequate, impressive house of God, symbolic of the fine spirit that prevails nowadays over the prairies, down the coulées and on the coteaus of the old Plaquemine Brulé area.

——— THE END ———

SPECIAL DONATIONS FOR THE NEW CHURCH TO DATE

WINDOWS:

Edward Daigle Family	$ 4,000.00
John Horecky Family	4,000.00
Emile Daigle Family	4,000.00
Arzina Richard	2,150.00

TABERNACLE:

A. H. Arceneaux in memory of his wife	$ 1,200.00

BAPTISMAL FONT:

Mr. and Mrs. Willard Beaugh	450.00

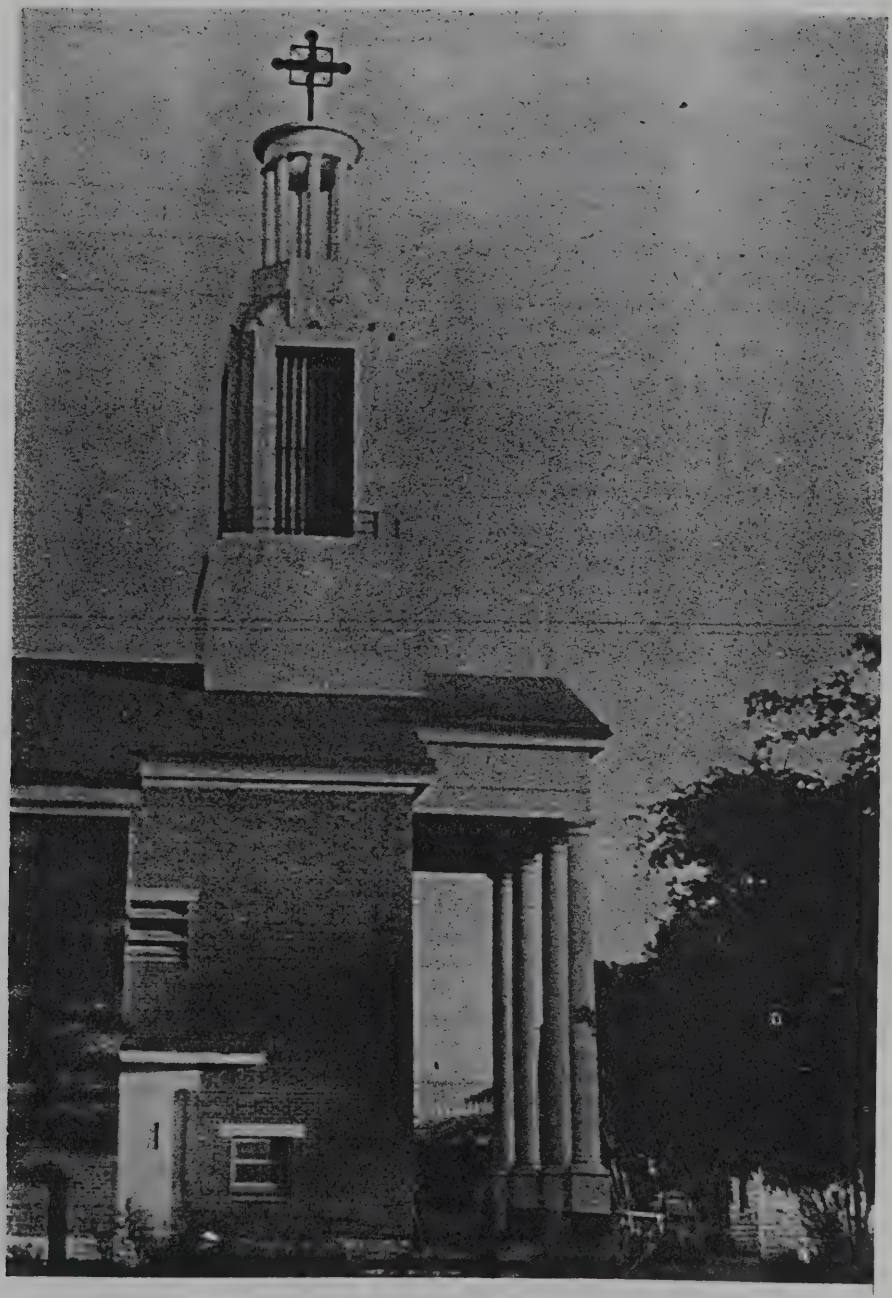
FLAGS

Mrs. A. Breaux	50.00

THE LADIES ALTAR SOCIETY. HELPED BY THE CATHOLIC DAUGHTERS ($1,170.00); KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS, ($500.00); SODALITY OF ST. ANN, ($100.00) PAID FOR THE FOLLOWING:

Set of Vestments for the Dedication ceremonies	$ 685.00
Statue of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart	132.00
Altar Fixtures to date	872.00
Draperies for Sanctuary	2,746.00
Painting of Statues and Way of the Cross	1,255.00
Furniture for Sanctuary, (Catholic Daughters)	1,170.00

THE CHOIR HAS MADE A DONATION TOWARDS THE NEW ORGAN OF $370.00. The new organ will cost $10,000.00 to be delivered in June, 1955.



1929 1954

Twenty-Fifth Anniversary

of

Ordination to the Holy Priesthood

Right Reverend Monsignor

C. A. Bienvenu

November 25-28, 1954

Church of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart,
Church Point, Louisiana

Right Reverend Monsignor Clay A. Bienvenu

Father Clay Anthony Bienvenu, son of the late Laizaire Epiphany Bienvenu and Leoncia Tertrou, one of twelve children, was born October 7, 1900, at St. Martinville, La. After finishing parochial school he entered St. Joseph Preparatory Seminary at St. Benedict, La., and then studied four years at Kenrick Seminary, St. Louis, Mo.

After interrupting his studies to teach school he resumed his studies in 1927 at Notre Dame Seminary of New Orleans and on May 25, 1929, at the age of 29 he was ordained to the holy priesthood. His first assignment was at St. Michael's Church at Crowley, La. He served as an Army Chaplain during the summer of 1930 and was commissioned a Captain in the U. S. Army in October, 1934. He served three years as District Chaplain of the Civilians Conservation Corps for Louisiana and Mississippi.

In June of 1936, Father Bienvenu became pastor of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart church, succeeding the late Very Rev. Canon Auguste Viel. After making improvements to the rectory and the cemetery, Father Bienvenu undertook a number of successful local church activities and established St. Edward's Chapel at Richard Settlement.

Other chapels were established at Lewisburg, Branch and at Pitreville. Simultaneous improvements made at the parish plant included a brick community center, the enlargement of school facilities and the further improvement of the church and rectory. Finally plans were started for a new church and on July 7, 1953, bids were awarded for the construction of the new building.

The dedication of the church and the celebration of his twenty-fifth anniversary in the priesthood are the climax of Father Bienvenu's life work.

Roger Baudier, Sr., K.S.G., official chronicler of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, summarizes this wonderful event as follows:

"With the dedication of its new Parish Church of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, the venerable century-old parish closes a century of labors and travails and sacrifices, and under the leadership of an energetic, devoted and self-sacrificing pastor, goes forward into a future of great promise spiritually, a future opened years ago by the patient Jesuit missionaries, and towards which Father Eby, Father Roger, and Father Viel sought to lead their flock. Monsignor Bienvenu has done much, but despite many labors, he continued tirelessly his efforts on behalf of what is most dear to his priestly heart—his parishioners."

Banquet

for the

Clergy, Knights of St. Gregory,

Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus

and Special Guests

Tendered to the

Right Reverend Monsignor C. A. Bienvenu

on the occasion of the

of his

Twenty-Fifth Anniversary

of

Ordination to the Holy Priesthood

Thursday, November 25th, 1954

at 1:00 P. M.

Parish Hall

Church Point, Louisiana

Menu

Appetizer

Celery Olives Pickles

Baked Ham

Creole Rice Dressing Pineapple Delight Sweet Peas

Baked Turkey Cranberries

Red and White Wines

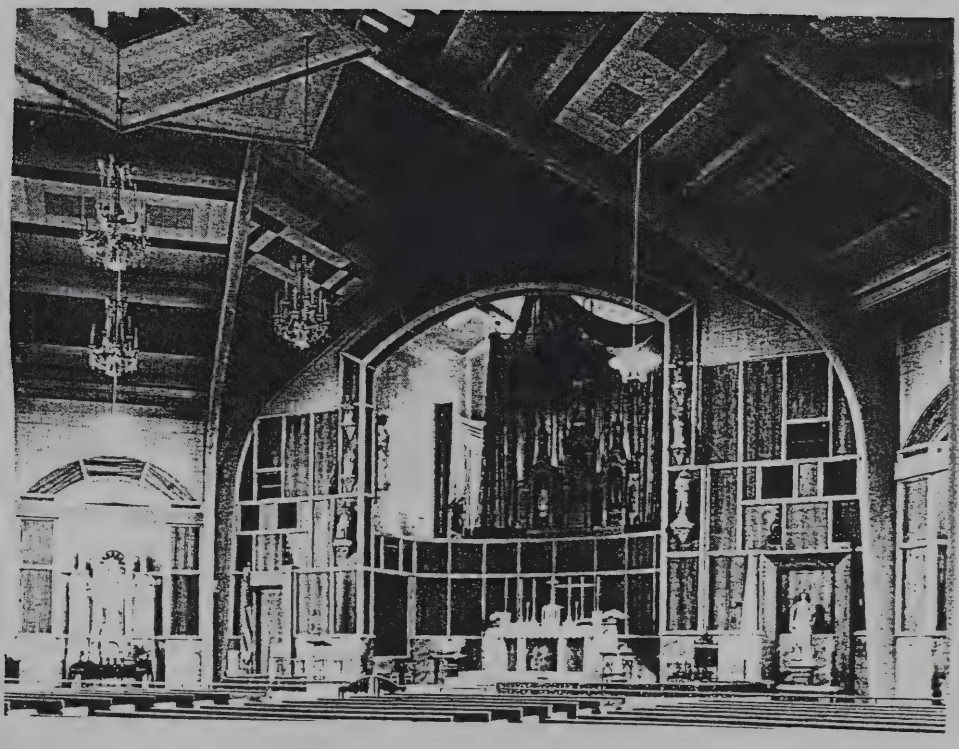
Dinner Rolls

Dessert Surprise

Cigarettes Cigars

Mints Nuts

Coffee



RIGHT REVEREND MONSIGNOR
CLAY A. BIENVENU

PRAYER

Be propitious, O. God, to him Thy priest, Fill his heart and soul with charity, unction and zeal, that his ministry be fruitful for Thy honor and glory. Amen.

"O Jesus! be on this day a token of my gratitude; bless those who led me to Thy Holy Altar."
"O Mary, my Mother, bless me in the service of Thy Son."

• • • •

MARIAN YEAR 1954

A Remembrance of my
Silver Jubilee of Ordination
St. Martinville, La.
May, 25, 1929
Right Reverend Monsignor
Clay A. Bienvenu
and the Solemn Dedication
of the new church of
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart
Church Point, Louisiana
November, 25, 1954

• • • •

PRAY FOR ME

"Lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway."—I Cor. IX-27.

"O Jesus! be on this day a token of my gratitude; bless those who led me to Thy Holy Altar."
"O Mary, my Mother, bless me in the service of Thy Son."

• • • •

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• • • •

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Greetings

from

CHURCH POINT, LOUISIANA

Program

Toastmaster....Right Reverend Monsignor J. M. Bourgeois, V. F.
Dean of the Opelousas Deanery

Address..... Most Reverend Maurice Schexnayder, D. D.
Auxiliary Bishop of Lafayette

Remarks ..... Reverend Emery Labbe

Response ..... Right Reverend Monsignor C. A. Bienvenu

Songs

HAPPY JUBILEE

For they are jolly good fellows
Which nobody can deny!
Happy Jubilee to you!
Happy Jubilee, Father Bienvenu
Happy Jubilee to you!
For he has reached twenty-five!
He'll never see it again!
Happy Jubilee Father Bienvenu!
Happy Jubilee Father Bienvenu!

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And days of auld lang syne?
For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We'll take a cup of kindness yet
For auld lang syne.

God bless America, land that I love
Stand beside her and guide her
Through the night with a light from above
From the mountains, to the prairies
To the oceans white with foam
God bless America, my home sweet home.

Salve, Regina, Mater misericordiac:
Vita, dulcedo, et spes
nostra, salve. Ad te
clamamus, exsules, filii
Hevae. Ad te suspira-
mus, gementes et flentes in
hac lacrimarum valle.
Eia ergo, Advocata nostra,
illos tuos miseri
cordes oculos ad nos converte
Et Jesum, benedictum fructum
ventris tui, nobis post hoc
exsilium ostende.
O clemens: O pia: O Ducis
Virgo Maria.

Way down upon the Sewanee Ribber,
Far, far away
Dere's wha' my heart is turning ebber,
Dere's wha' de old folks stay.
All up and down the whole creation,
Sadly I roam,
Still longin' for de old plantation,
An' for de old folks at home.
All de world am sad and dreary
Eb're where I roam;
Oh! darkies, how my heart grows weary,
Far from de old folks at home.

I wish I was in de land ob cotton
Old times dar am not forgotten,
Look away: / Dixie Land.
In Dixie Land whar I was born in,
Early on one frosty mornin',
Look away: / Dixie Land.
CHORUS:
Den I wish I was in Dixie,
Hooray! Hooray!
In Dixie Land, I'll take my stand
To lib and die in Dixie:
Away: / down south in Dixie: /.
Dars buckwheat cakes an' Ingen batter,
Makes you fat, or a little fatter,
Look away: / Dixie Land.
Den hoe it down and scratch your grabble
To Dixie Land I'm bound to trabble,
Look away: ? Dixie Land.

Oh give me a home
Where the buffalo roam,
Where the deer and the antelope play,
Where seldom is heard
A discouraging word,
And the skies are not cloudy all day.
CHORUS:
Home, home on the range
Where the deer and the antelope play
Where seldom is heard,
A discouraging word,
And the skies are not cloudy all day.
How often at night
When the heavens are bright
With the light of the glittering stars,
Have I stood there amazed
And asked as I gazed
If their glory exceeds that of ours.

With someone like you
A pal good and true,
I'd like to leave it all behind and go and find
Someplace that's known to God alone,
Just a spot to call our own,
We'd find perfect peace
Where joys never cease
Out there beneath a kindly sky
We'll build a sweet little nest
Somewhere out in the West
And let the rest of the world go by.

Solemn Dedication of the New Church of

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart
Church Point, Louisiana

Thursday, November 25, 1954

Most Reverend Jules B. Jeanmard, D. D.,
Bishop of Lafayette

officiating and presiding at

The Solemn High Mass

on the occasion of the

Silver Sacerdotal Jubilee of

The Right Reverend Monsignor C. A. Bienvenu
Celebrant

Reverend Lawrence Fournet,
Assistant Priest

Reverend Lawrence Bonin,
Deacon

Rev. Michael Bakowski,
Sub-Deacon

Right Reverend Monsignor
Olan A. Broussard
Preacher

Reverend Emery Labbe and Reverend Paul Thibodeaux,
Masters of Ceremonies

Mass Sung by the Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Mixed Choir

Mrs. Irene H. Daigle,
Organist

Civic Reception Honoring
Right Reverend Monsignor C. A. Bienvenu
on the Occasion of His Silver Sacerdotal Jubilee
November 28, 1954

5:00 P.M. SOLEMN HIGH MASS

MONSIGNOR BIENVENU,
Celebrant

REV. GENE SPEYRER, Deacon

REV. MICHAEL BAKOWSKI, Sub-Deacon

REVEREND EMERY LABBE,
Preacher

7:30 P.M. FORMAL RECEPTION AT THE PARISH HALL

Master of Ceremonies . . . . . Mr. Earl Fontenot,
Grand Knight, Knights of Columbus Council, No. 2504

Invocation . . . . . Rev. Gene Speyrer

Welcome . . . His Honor The Mayor Raoul Beaugh

Parish Representative . . . . . Mr. Mike Scanlan,
Executive Chairman New Church Building Fund Committee

Presentation of Gifts—
Knights of Columbus; Mothers and Patrons Club; Catholic Daughters of America; Ladies Altar Society; Sodality of St. Ann; Columbian Squires; Junior Daughters of America; Assistants; Burse.

Musical Selection, "Ave Maria" . . Bruce Arceneaux and Craig Quibodeaux

Invited Guest Speaker . . . . . Mr. Xavier Mouton,
Knight of St. Gregory

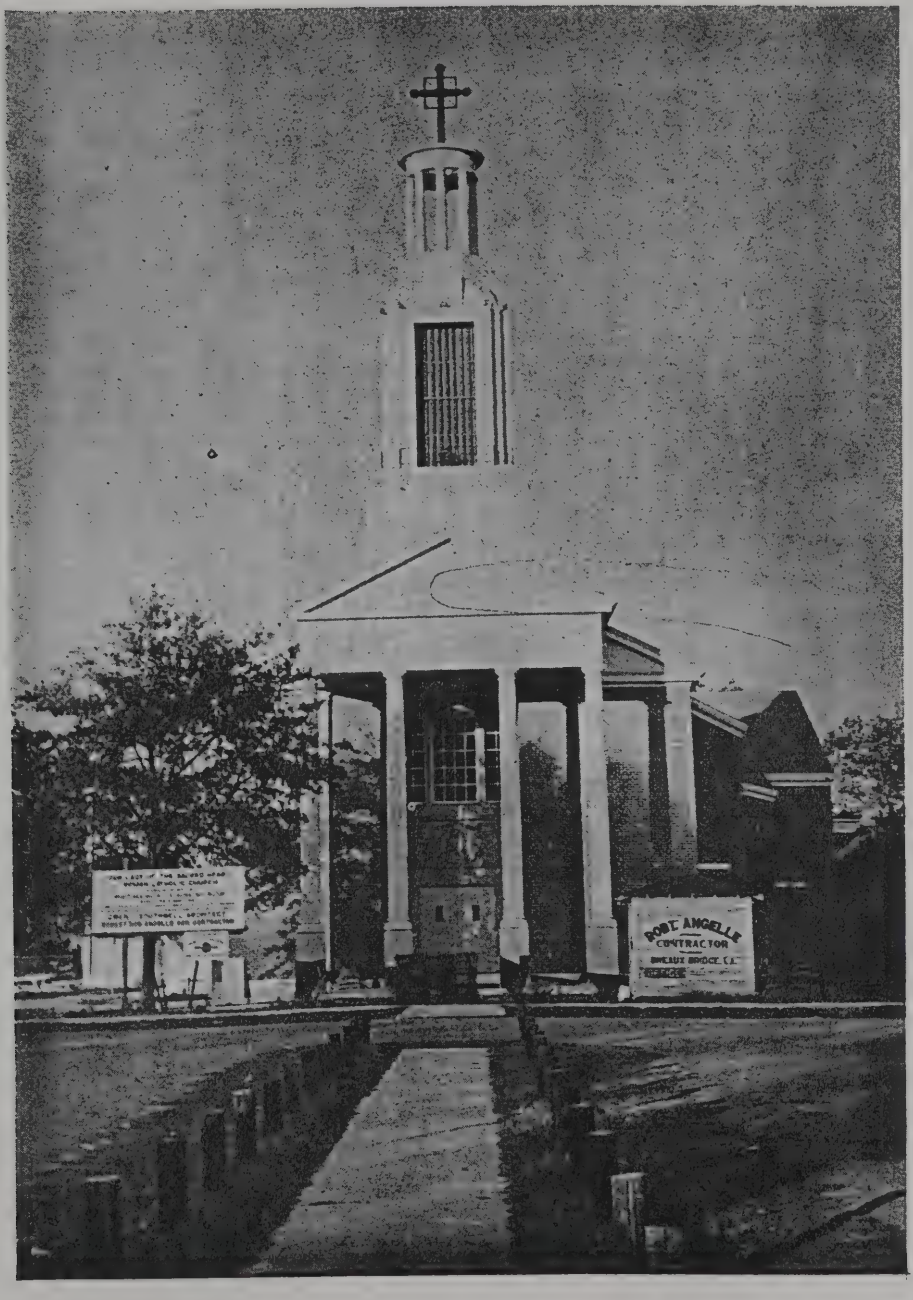
Musical Selection, "Lavender Blue" . Dwight Lyons and Gloria Andrepont

Response . . . . . Right Rev. Msgr. C. A. Bienvenu

Closing Prayer . . . . . Rev. Michael Bakowski

INFORMAL RECEPTION

Decorations . . . . . Dr. Alyce Williams
Cakes . . . . . Dr. and Mrs. Clifford Keller
Punch . . . . . Mothers and Patrons Club
Ushers . . . . . Mr. Johnny Broussard
Sponsors . . . . . Knights of Columbus


ROBT. ANGELLE
CONTRACTOR